

How to survive

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(Translated by Marcia Kono)

When I came to Japan, I knew that it sometimes faced earthquakes. But I was told that there were few in the Kansai Area, and so I had nothing to worry about. But it happened. We were awoken by a great rumble; everything was shaking, trembling. Things fell down, my bed was also moving I was terrified. Then I realized it was an earthquake, and that as I lived on Port Island, (an artificial island) it could possibly sink.

I escaped from my room and met the other girls in the corridor. We did not know what to do, or how to behave. But the shaking continued, and we heard a fire alarm, so decided to get out of the building.

After some time, still outside, we heard the first news about the disaster. No-one could believe it had happened, and to such a terrible extent. Then we entered the residence and saw the news on TV, showing the increasing number of deaths, the disaster and destruction, crushed houses and buildings... I became even more afraid. Throughout the whole day tremors continued to occur... It was a long and tense day for all of us.

In the following days, we had no water, gas or food. But information about the situation was always available, so we were able to stay calm and think about what we should do then. Remembering now what happened, I can think of several important points which I think may be useful if a similar disaster occurs:

- * Arrange your furniture in a way so as not to get hurt if it should fall when a disaster happens;
- * Have all important documents in the same place. They should be easy to reach in emergency situations;
- * Make sure to verify all emergency exits and secure access in the place you live;
- * Try to keep calm and not panic while a disaster is happening;
- * Try to contact, as soon as possible, your family, friends, the university... if you are a foreign student, call relatives in your country and also contact your Embassy. Tell them about what happened and where you are able to be contacted;
- * After the disaster, accumulate all possible information, and wait for proper instructions;
- * Helping people around you as much as possible is also very important.

THE GREAT HANSHIN EARTHQUAKE: RECOLLECTIONS OF A
'NEW' FOREIGNER.

Charles F A Akayuli (M) GHANA

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Today, 17th April 1995, is exactly three months to the day the Great Hanshin Earthquake shook the once beautiful city of Kobe, sometimes dubbed the most technologically advanced city in the world, and its environs. Even though there are still people living in evacuation centres the majority of the people are gradually going back to their normal lives and trying to put behind all the traumatic events that befell the quake. It might, therefore, appear insensitive to write about the quake this time, especially when the people are trying to pick up the pieces of their lives, however I feel that through this forum I can share my experiences during those few days with fellow students to let them know what we went through as foreign students.

I arrived in Kobe on the 20th of December 1994, at the beginning of the winter, my first time outside Africa. I got a room in the Kobe University International Residence at Port Island. It is needless to add that I could not understand a single word of Japanese those days and apart from the route to the university and back, I knew next to nothing. The major problem I had was the cold.

The quake struck when I was not even one month old in Japan. In the early hours of the morning of this fateful day, 17th January 1995, I was awakened by a great, loud, roaring sound accompanied by violent tossing and shaking of everything in my room followed by the crashing of falling plates, cups, glassware etc all over the room. At first I thought the world was coming to an end as prophesied in the bible but it just didn't fit the biblical pattern. (1Thess. 5:14-17). Then I thought I was dreaming but when I dared open my eyes I saw it was real then my mind went to earthquake. Of course from my Geology lectures I knew that Japan is situated on an earthquake-prone zone of the earth but I didn't think it likely. In Kobe- I was wrong. It was the Great Hanshin Earthquake - the Japanese accolade given to this catastrophic phenomenon that devastated the city, killed over 5,000 people, and traumatised thousands if not millions of others for good. Thus I saw history being made. Just as suddenly as it began everything came to a stop - the shaking, the noise and all ceased. Then hell broke loose. The fire alarm came on and I could hear a stampede of steps of a crowd rushing down the staircases. I joined in, almost bare footed, and was carried down and out of the building by the sheer impetus of the crowd; I remember in the process somebody was cut by broken glasses. The cry was 'everyone for himself and God for us all'. I only remembered to look for my fellow Ghanaian when I found myself outside.

There was already a collection of people on the streets when we got there and this number kept on increasing till the streets became full and spilled over into the nearby playground. It was so cold outside that I was literally shaking from foot to toe. I dared not go back into the residence because of the frequent aftershocks. These rather

caused people to move further away from the buildings into the playground. So even though I was shivering in the sub-zero temperatures I had to hang out in the playground with the rest of the people till day break. The damage to the residence was extensive but as compared to the damage in the rest of Kobe it was like child's play. However, to our horror we realised that our water and gas supplies were cut off but there was still electricity. We all crowded around the T.V. set to hear the news and it was then we heard the first news of the earthquake.

Then the departures began. Even though cars could not use the bridge joining Port Island to the mainland, word passed round that it was possible to leave on foot so some of the residents decided to leave. By evening we could see a pall of smoke hanging over Sannomiya and this sent shivers of fear through most of us. There was no food nor water and the little water and drinks that was available we shared among ourselves as we huddled around the T.V. waiting for the latest news. That night we all slept on the first floor – either in the lobby or in the library. Then came the rumours – port island was sinking, it had already sunk by 3 metres! This sent a lot of fear and panic through the hearts of many and even those who didn't think of living changed their minds. By the end of the second day more than three quarters of residents had left. Meanwhile the hardships continued. There was the occasional water tanker and one would find a very long queue waiting (patiently?)

Bathing was a luxury; any available water was reserved for drinking and flushing the toilets. No cooking; so we had to live live on instant noodles, fruits, and other food handouts from philanthropists. Then came the second rumour– The Adviser had also left the residence with his family so it was better for all to leave This was easily discounted when he was seen pinning notices on the billboard. Then the 'Full moon syndrome' It was rumoured that at the next full moon there will be another earthquake of a bigger magnitude and this made a lot more of students to panic and leave.– sometimes at night.

By the end of the second week there were only seven residents in the residence. Our daily routine was to wake up early in the morning look around for water and food. Sometimes these were brought to us at the residence. The Adviser and his family were very helpful – providing us with water and food as frequently as they were available. The SDF came to our rescue finally by installing a public bath and water containers where we could easily get water for drinking. We could now also have a bath every other day.

Information flow was the major problem since non of us could understand enough Japanese to make intelligent interpretation of the news into English. We relied mostly on the foreign news agencies.–BBC, CNN etc. Even though we went through a lot of hardships during this period, we learnt a lot from the Japanese people. There was no looting or other criminal activities as would surely have happened in most countries. There was order and decency in the queues– even to the extent that foreigners were sometimes given special assistance.

By the middle of February gas services were restored and later water also started flowing. Most students also

started returning even though the transportation system still remained chaotic. Going to the university from port island was a nightmare. I remember we had to walk for two hours! My supervisor when he saw me was so sympathetic he asked me just to stay at home and only keep in touch by phone.

Thus the Great Hanshin Earthquake, though catastrophic in the magnitude of destruction of both property and human lives, it brought out the qualities of patience and self sacrifice of the Japanese people. Qualities that are worth emulating.

Thinking

Leo Naoto Arai (M) BRAZIL
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(Translated by Marcia Kono)

The earthquake that occurred on January 17th in the Kansai Area, was truly a strong and shocking experience for me.

I lived in a dormitory situated in Mukaijima, Kyoto Prefecture on the tenth floor. Even though the shaking and the intensity I felt was not comparable to that of what the people of Kobe went through, I stood still, paralysed, without knowing what to do.

The earthquake seemed to last for minutes. I could not imagine, then, how terrible the disaster had been in Kobe.

Many people were not able to survive this demonstration of nature's strength, and are now gone. Others are still "in shock", "lost", without understanding what happened and what they should do.

To those who were lucky enough to live through this nightmare, I wish them hope, determination, and that they will "love" their lives even more. To those who did not experience this disaster, I hope that they will enjoy the life they have, and not get too close to material belongings. For we got used to the materialism which is present in the Japanese system, but shall keep in mind that nature is even stronger, and is able to take all this "comfort" from us...

Earthquake Memorial

Aye Aye (f) MYANMAR
Kobe University
(Translated by Aye Aye)

At 5:46am on Tuesday, 17th January 1995, a devastating earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter Scale rocked Hyogo Prefecture and other parts of central and western Japan. It devastated central Kobe City, crushing buildings and homes, suspending train services and cutting electricity and water supplies. More than five thousand people died, and nearly three hundred thousand lost their homes.

On the 16th January, I went to bed very early at 8:00pm. In the middle of the night at around 3:30am, I woke up suddenly. I didn't know what to do, so I drank a cup of water turned off the T.V. and went back to bed. Later, I was awoken by movements which shook the building from top to bottom. I heard a rumbling noise from the deepest part of the earth. It was then that I realized a strong earthquake had hit. I couldn't stand and so I crouched beneath a table. The electricity supply had been cut off. I thought I was going to die. At that stage, a Japanese student knocked on my door and said that everybody had gone outside to the parking area. So I went too, down from the sixth floor without any shoes.

That same day, I phoned my family in Myanmar. I said that everything was OK; there was no need to worry about me. But, four days later, my mother heard the news that many people had died, with serious damage to Kobe City caused by the powerful earthquake. Because of this, she suffered a heart attack and became seriously ill, full of anxiety and depression. She wanted to see me, but at that time the transportation of Kobe City was paralyzed, and I could not go back to my country.

Two months after the earthquake, my mother's condition remained very serious, and on the 17th March she passed away for ever.

Thus, I had a primary shock due to the Great Hanshin Earthquake of Kobe City, as well as a secondary shock, feeling burdened by the recent death of my beloved mother. I never want to experience these tragic feelings again, and thus pray before Buddha for human life all over the world.

To the two beloved

Aye Thin Hlaing (f) MYANMAR
Kobe University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

Tomorrow marks the passage of three months since I met with the Great Hanshin Earthquake. This experience signifies an important page in my life that I can never forget as long as I live.

I lost two of my close friends and countrymen in the Great Hahshin Earthquake. Their names were Luin and Khin. They were not simply friends and compatriots; they held a special place in my heart as we used to stay in the same apartment, used to work together and used to share the joys and sorrows in this foreign land.

I need to apologize to both of you. My mind is full of sorrow and I can not relax if I do not put my feelings into words.

I can not forget; at 5:46am on Tuesday the 17th January, 1995, Kobe became a living hell. The seven storied apartment where we all used to live on the first floor collapsed and we were buried under a pile of rubble. None of us had even dreamed of meeting with such ill-fate. While I was trapped in the concrete mass I heard Luin's voice which sounded as if she was safe.

Dear Luin, that time, I had trust in your kind and impartial nature and was sure that after being helped by others you would come to rescue us.

Dear Khin, I could not hear your voice, but it was because your room was further away. I believed that too would also be rescued.

At 12:15pm, I was rescued and it was then that I realised that whatever I had thought in my mind until now was far from the reality.

I was told by the people who came to rescue us that the two of you, whom I expected to be waiting for me, could not be rescued. I was the only one who was able to be saved. I repeatedly questioned those people as to why you two could not be helped. I even said that I would wait there with you until you two were able to be rescued.

Amidst lots of difficulties I was taken to a nearby hospital. At that moment too, I had a strong belief that you would be saved.

Around evening, a Burmese friend who used to work at the same place rushed to the hospital, bringing with him some potato chips. From their conversation I learnt that due to lack of adequate rescue personnel they could not rescue you. Other Burmese had also lost their houses and had to take refuge. We held hands together and could not talk about anything else since we burst into tears. We had lost all ability to speak because of our sorrow. I was not even able to feel happy for having survived.

The doctors gave me pain-killers, however it could not stop the pain, added to the spiritual pain, and I could not stop myself from crying.

The next day I started my struggle towards recovery. On the 20th I was transferred to Kakogawa Hospital and the treatment continued.

After undergoing an operation I received a telephone call from the head of the International

Student Centre of Kobe University. He informed me that Luin's funeral was held on the night of the 21st while Khin's funeral had not yet been held. He also wanted to confirm that I was Aye Thin Hlaing, and that I had survived. It was only at this time, while talking to the Head of the Foreign Students Centre that I came to know the secret news that you two were no longer living.

When I finished the call, the control I had over my feelings burst. Until now I had controlled myself as to not cry in front of everyone, however on hearing the news about Luin and Khin, I could not stop the tears and cried out aloud in the hospital.

Dear Luin, I am very selfish. What was I doing on the day of your funeral?

On the 21st, one of my Burmese friends came to see me in the hospital with one of her host family. They had learnt from somewhere that I would be undergoing an operation on the 23rd and so they came to cheer me up.

I didn't want others to know about the pain I was experiencing and hence I used to talk to everyone with a smiling face. Amidst the uncertainty of the surgery and the pain of the wound, I don't know even know whether I was enjoying myself at that time or not. When I was buried in the rubble of concrete, I heard Luin's cheerful voice a couple of times. Her death, for me, was totally unexpected

However, dear Luin, if I had been enjoying myself at the time of your departure from this world, it would be an unfair act on my behalf.

I constantly thought of Khin's funeral. What could I do now; what should I do now? I kept on asking myself the same questions, trying to discover the answers. I was in pain and could not sleep. I relied on sleeping drugs, however I could still hear Khin's voice.

Dear Luin and Khin, please forgive me. Probably the only thing that I can do for you now is to pray that your souls rest in peace in the heavens.

On the 17th March a joint funeral ceremony was held but I could not do anything for you but pray like all others.

Tomorrow marks the passage of exactly three months since the once in a thousand year earthquake. Even now I can still hear Khin's cry from beneath the trash, "I want to go back to Burma", and the other day the message from Khin's mother, "Tell her to return to Burma as soon as possible" distinctly remain in my mind. I will never be able to forget the fate that you were destined to.

The memories of spending time with you and working hard with you are unforgettable. Let me say once again, dear Luin and Khin, please forgive me.

Earthquake

Karen Bagu (f) AUSTRALIA
Kobe University

I arrived in Japan on October 4th, 1994, to take up a Monbusho (Japanese Government Ministry of Education) Scholarship for eighteen months. The scholarship is called 'Teacher Training Program' and involved an initial six months' Japanese language study at Kobe University, and a further one years' study of 'Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language at Hyogo University of Teacher Education. I was living in the International Students' Residence at Port Island which is a man-made island in the Port of Kobe. My initial six months' language study was to run until March but was cut short by the earthquake.

This is my story of the earthquake:

On the 16th of January I went to visit a Japanese family who were friends of mine in Nishinomiya. It was Adults Day (Seijinshiki) holiday so we relaxed together at their home. When I got back to my residence I had caught a bit of a chill. "I wonder whether I will be able to go to University tomorrow", I thought. But I really liked what we were doing at University so I thought I would try to go. After a while I fell asleep.

The next morning (the 17th January) at 5:46am I was awakened by the room shaking violently. I knew straight away that I was in a real earthquake as I remembered the earthquake simulator that I'd experienced when I was teaching at Kawagoe Girls' High School about five years ago during a previous visit to Japan. We had an earthquake education van come to the school and a group at a time got into the van and experienced what a real earthquake would be like, from the scale of one to seven. It seemed to be the same as Scale No. 7.

When the earthquake happened it was still dark so I couldn't see clearly, but I remember seeing the wardrobe fall. The worst thing was the sound of breaking glass and things crashing around me. The earthquake, shaking me so strongly, was an awful feeling. I thought that the building was going to collapse. I felt abandoned but tried to hold on to the bed. When it was over I couldn't believe that the building was still standing.

The earthquake was over fairly quickly but the experience still remains in my memory, especially the feeling of the room and my body being shaken about. When the room stopped shaking I got out as soon as possible. All the girls on my floor were in the corridor. I grabbed a coat from my room and we all went downstairs and gathered across the road where there is a small park. The first thing I noticed was that the pavement was all buckled and big gaps were evident in the concrete. Soon after, we saw that muddy water had flooded over the roads making it difficult to walk. I kept looking up at our building wondering how it was able to still be standing. I felt very thankful that it had survived and we had not been hurt. After a few hours we were allowed back into the building but most people, after cleaning up their rooms, stayed downstairs and watched what was happening on the TV. It was then that I began to realise the extent of the damage. Not long after, the power went off so we listened to reports on a battery operated radio. Of course it was in Japanese but together we were able to work out what was being said.

That afternoon a couple of boys walked into the centre of Kobe and back to report it was all a mess and that our train line - which connects into Sannomiya, Kobe's central shopping area - had

been sheared off. Later on a group of us walked over the bridge that connects Port Island with Sannomiya, trying to avoid the slippery mud which had come up from under the ground due to the movement of the buildings. The bridge was closed to traffic because it had large cracks in the road but you could still walk over it. From the bridge we could see the Port Terminal below, where the edge of the port had broken off into the sea, taking the shipping containers waiting on the dock with it. We realised the area was still dangerous as we could see buildings tilting over, lots of rubble on the ground and a building with whole floors that had disappeared, having been sandwiched between the floors above and below. We didn't go any further but quickly returned to the residence.

About 5pm the power came back on to our residence and I was able to call my parents in Australia and friends in Japan to tell them I was OK. Of course they were relieved to hear my voice because they had been trying all day to ring in but the telephone lines weren't connecting.

That night the people in the residence felt uneasy about sleeping in their own rooms so we brought our futons downstairs and slept together in a room on the ground floor. At the time of the earthquake my first impression was that it had happened around Port Island only, but after watching TV I realised that the whole of Kobe had been affected. On Port Island the train line was broken and the roads were closed so there was no way to escape. There was no water and little food, so it felt like a war situation. We had to line up outside in order to get drinking water. Two days after the earthquake we were able to board a boat which took us to Kansai Airport. We knew that there would be many people trying to get on the boat so we got up at 5am, each taking a small suitcase or bag of belongings with us, and walked down to the port. We left the rest of our belongings behind in the residence. It was a long wait for a flight home to their own countries and some who had friends in other parts of Japan decided to go to them. As I had friends in Tokyo I decided to go to stay with them until it became clear what would happen to our studies.

From the airport I took a normal train to Kyoto because the Shinkansen (bullet train) wasn't operating but from Kyoto I was able to get the Shinkansen to Tokyo. As we approached Tokyo, seeing so many houses so close together that they're almost on top of one another I thought to myself, "If there was an earthquake here it would wipe out the whole place through things falling and fires spreading". After arriving at my friends' house in Saitama it was nice to have a proper meal and a shower. That night was the first night that I had been able to sleep well but I was a bit scared because above my futon around the edge of the room there was a shelf with many objects on it and I was afraid they would fall down on me in the night, so the family took the things off the shelf.

The night before I left the residence in Kobe I went upstairs to my room to pack a few belongings and at that time I felt a strange atmosphere there. Before the earthquake I had always enjoyed being in my room (which was on the 5th and top floor), and putting on the radio and doing my homework but after the earthquake every time I went in my room I had an awful feeling. I still feel apprehensive about going back to that room although I will have to go back up my belongings. Even though I am back in Australia it has taken me some time to get used to sleeping in a room on my own again.

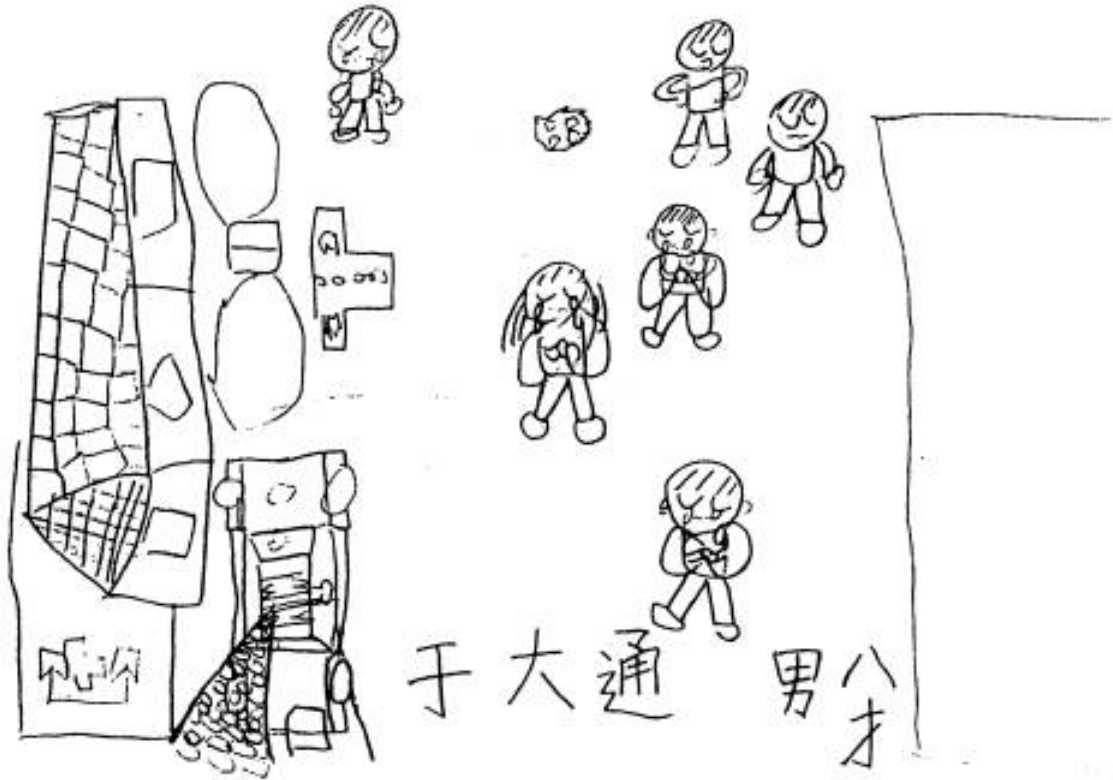
On the first day when someone told me that over 350 people had died I didn't believe it but each day the reports of the number of people dead had increased to be over 5000. It is still hard to believe that so much destruction could occur and so many peoples' lives could be changed in such a short time.

Perhaps my first response after the earthquake, thinking that it had mainly occurred around my

home in Port Island, was to think that after cleaning up we would be able to resume our everyday lives again quite soon. But the reality turned out to be much worse than I had at first thought. When I left Japan at the end of February (after staying with my friends in Saitama for over a month) most Kobe residents still didn't have gas on in their homes, and were living in school halls in very spartan conditions.

Transport is also difficult because of most trains being unable to operate due to broken train lines. In some areas, buses have been able to take their place. The extent of the overall damage is still being assessed and it will take years before the rebuilding of the city of Kobe is complete.

I am at home in Geelong now for one month before I return to Japan to continue my studies. I will be starting at Hyogo University in April.



The Tuesday Kobe failed to wake up to itself

E.A.B.

Kobe University

(Translated by E.A.B)

"Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

Exactly two months ago the city of Kobe and surrounding environs woke up to a natural disaster that made a devastating mark that sent ripples round the world.

Each of us was anticipating to start the third week of this year but for some it was not to be so. This 7.2 tremor which has been dubbed "The Great Hanshin Earthquake", claimed lives in excess of 5000 of which 39 are fellow students.

Seven students left their respective countries for Kobe to pursue academic ventures but their dreams have met a tragic end.

For the dead that we mourn this day; nothing can be done to change their status quo.

But the question we should ask ourselves individually is if it had been me what would had been my fate. We thank God that we are alive today to mourn our dear brothers and sisters, not that we are better, but this is an opportunity for us to evaluate what we have been doing.

So that when our lives come to their respective ends we can confidently say that our lives have been well spent. To our dear brothers and sisters, we hope to meet again in eternity.

Earthquake - My First Experience

Cai Ai Qin (f) CHINA

Kobe University

(Translated by Welody Ivonn Tan)

On the night before the earthquake I went to bed slightly earlier than usual as I had an important lecture the next day. All of a sudden, at around dawn, I felt a very violent shake. At first I thought that I was dreaming, sailing on a boat in the middle of a typhoon. Then I thought to myself, "Hey! What am I doing at sea?" Immediately, I woke up. Everything around me was shaking, with a deafening sound. Finally I realized, "Gosh! It's an earthquake... and it's real!" The terrible sound that screamed its way into my ears was coming from my neighbours' and my place; the sound of breaking objects; dishes and cooking utensils. I thought that the sound would stop soon, and after a while it did, but it seemed like ages before it finally did. Petrified, I froze. It was not until I heard my neighbours open their doors that I realized that I should get the hell out of there. Everybody escaped from their houses. Although it was still very dark, everyone was talking excitedly to each other about their own experiences, as was I.

My house was gone. I had to stay at my friend's house in Osaka for a few days. When I went to my faculty's office I was informed that I could get some of the things that I needed from the Foreign Students Centre, so I went there. The staff helped me solve some of my problems. As a victim of the quake, I really appreciate all the help that they have given me.

This made me feel that I should do something for the other victims. Thus, I took part in a concert called, "Let's Fight. We Love Kobe - Asian Concert", held on the 19th March at Nankyo city. The actual devastation caused by the earthquake was in reality much more severe than was shown on TV. Within just a few moments my beloved Kobe had been destroyed. My heart ached.

Although it was drizzling and cold, there were a lot of people that came to watch the concert so I was very excited. We performed to our best in spite of the cold, and I felt very happy because I was able to comfort those victims with my music. It was the first time I had done something for humanity. I was very impressed by the way the victims faced the earthquake.

Although we as human beings cannot do anything to fight nature's power, I think that we should all work together and help each other to work together to solve our problems.

That Moment

Chen Hui (陈) CHINA

Kobe University

(Translated by Hannah Lee)

Fukae was a place previously unknown to most people living outside of Kobe, but due to the Great Hanshin Earthquake on January 17, Fukae became famous: it was where a portion of the Hanshin Expressway collapsed onto its side. My house was very close to it. I really liked the research room I used to commute to everyday at Kobe University of Mercantile Marine, and I often stayed there until late at night. No matter how late I stayed, it was still only five minutes by bicycle to my house. When I had free time, I often went shopping in the cheap but lively shopping mall in Fukae. I was accustomed to my life. However due to the earthquake on the 17th, in one moment everything changed.

On the night of the 16th, as always I was writing my thesis. The deadline was approaching fast, and it was just after two o'clock when I fell asleep. As I was in bed, I can remember seeing the clock saying it was 2.40 in the morning of the 17th. I was sound asleep, but was woken by a huge swaying motion. I thought "Ah, it's an earthquake" and then I convinced myself "But it's alright, Kobe doesn't get earthquakes" and then at the same time "It's OK, it'll finish soon, I'll go back to sleep". However, the earthquake had such a powerful shaking motion, along with the noise that sounded like a cruel summer typhoon. "God, why isn't it ending?" Without thinking I turned back my futon and got up to escape. However, because of the shaking, I couldn't walk and after one step I thought to get under my desk beside the bed. At that moment I heard a loud CRASH as if something had fallen over, then something hit me on the head and I fell over. All this happened in one long moment.

It was pitch black and I couldn't see anything. I appeared to have fallen in the gap between my bed and desk, and I was aware that blood was seeping out from my head, but I didn't feel any pain. My arms and legs had also been injured, but I was able to move them slightly and stretch them. The smell of the earthen walls and the dust particles made it difficult to breathe. I wondered what had happened, and just as I thought I must have died, there was a big aftershock. It was as if I was on a swing. After a while I started thinking about what to do and how to get out of where I was. Moving my right hand I felt the telephone, and so decided to try and call someone - but when I picked up the receiver there was no tone. Next I felt around with my left hand. I felt a doll that had been hanging from the light on my ceiling. I realised that something was strange: why would the light that had been hanging on the ceiling be beside me on the floor? I slowly began to realise what had happened. The ceiling had collapsed and the walls had caved in. My room was on the first floor of an old wooden house. I wondered why, when it should be getting light outside it was still pitch black. It was because I was buried.

Unable to move I called out "HelpHelp!" From close by I heard someone else calling out "Help me!" It was a second year student who was at Kobe University of Mercantile Marine with me who had been living on the second floor. After a while I heard a noise coming from the second floor as if something was moving. I asked him "Are you alright?" and he replied "Yeah, somehow or another I'm OK. I think I can get out of here." I asked him "Can you go and get help from the police to get me out of here?" "Where are the police?" he asked. "They're beside Fukae Station" I begged him to hurry up. "There's no way to get out of here, there's no exit!" he yelled out. Then I heard a noise of roof tiles moving and glass smashing. He had escaped.

A fairly long time passed and then another aftershock came. In the dark, I could hear voices from somewhere outside. I was only in my pyjamas and didn't know how long I could bear the cold. No one was near me and no one knew where I was so I thought if I yelled out someone might hear me. After about two hours I heard someone say "Chen, are you OK?" "I'm not OK. Please help me." To my reply I heard "Wait a moment. I'll get someone to help." It was the student from the second floor. After a while, after hearing "just hold on a little longer" over and over again, I heard the sound of tatami mats being peeled off, and the roof tiles being thrown away. I saw a glint of light. The light gradually got bigger and bigger until I saw a person's face, and the world returned once more. I lifted my hand towards the light and my body was unearthed and pulled to safety. Still in my pyjamas I was carried through the window of the second floor.

Outside, I asked myself "Where am I? Where's my room?" My house no longer existed and it looked as if a one storied building had collapsed, instead of the two storeys it had been. The window of the second floor was about half a metre from the ground and was acting as an entrance. After I had been helped I went to a relief centre where the student from the second floor gave me a futon. I was asleep for over three hours next to a dead body without realising it.

It became night-time and finally my brother from Sakai came. I was taken to Sakai Hospital and treated. I found out that I had cut my head and that my body had bruises and cuts all over it, but fortunately nothing was broken. When I had been buried and injured, I hadn't felt any pain, but the next day my whole body was aching so much that I couldn't move. It was then that I realised the extent and the gravity of the earthquake, and I became aware that many of my fellow countrymen had died. In the circumstances that I was in, I realise that it is a miracle that I didn't die too.

Living under the Memories of the Great Hanshin Quake

Florence Chisale (f) ZAMBIA

The Great Hahshin Quake had me by surprise. It occurred hardly a month after I had read the instructions for disaster prevention from Hyogo Prefecture. The quake came at a moment when I was going through a process of adaptation to the Japanese way of life. So it really had some good and bad effects on me.

Good because it was time that everybody, foreigners as well as locals, got close to each other to fight what had befallen the beautiful city of Kobe. It was no time to look at the origin of the person but time to commit everybody to maximum comfort in order to heal the wounds which had just been inflicted on the people as far as their daily lives were concerned. I had the opportunity to talk to neighbours I had never spoken to. When I moved out of the neighbourhood, kind words of farewell were extended to me in contrast to when I moved in, when not many came close or spoke to me.

The bad side of the quake was depressing all in all. The city of Kobe became more of a ghost town. Sirens were heard day and night, planes flew the skies of Kobe for rescue operations, while on the psychological level tension built in the body and mind with every sight of a plane, fireman, ambulance or police vehicle. I wanted to be with people close to me by blood. This is not to say the locals were not kind enough but it is just natural for one to feel that way in case of extreme danger as was the case at hand. Life had suddenly turned upside down - I could not bath, cook what I wanted to eat, go out and meet friends or walk in the streets of Kobe without seeing inclined and collapsed buildings. We had to move out of Kobe for a while to regain our usual spiritual and physical energies. Hence, we did just that.

The most horrifying thing was the aftershocks especially as we had seen the effects of the real quake, the death toll, the darkness and damage.

This was an experience which I shall never forget in life. It brought the bad and the good face to face. But more of bad than good because people died, lost their property, etc...

How We Survived the Quake

Paul Chisale (m) ZAMBIA
Kobe University

On the 17th January, 1995, a big quake hit Kobe at 546 hours. I was partially awake and yet found myself screaming in my mother tongue. My wife, using her mother's instinct, jumped over my son and shielded him from the falling objects in the house. The quake itself and the aftershocks' rumbling noises carried an element of fear and psychological impact which will take time to heal. My wife, who was better prepared than I psychologically (for she had previously read earthquake instructions) snapped out of it and turned off the gas and water taps. We then went outside to see the damage caused by the quake.

Immediately after we went out, we realized that fires had erupted in most of the wards in Kobe. The smell of gas was everywhere and sirens were to be heard in all directions. We were seized with fear, for there was no light or way of communication with the outside world and everybody was in a state of a shock, or in a hurry to escape if more trouble was to come.

We stayed away from our cracked home until it was complete daylight. Different stories started coming in, all mentioning collapsed buildings, fires, blocked roads and above all, deaths. The foreigners from the our church all regrouped at a Canadian friend's home, so as not to feel cut off from society. After about an hour we decided to join the other citizens at a nearby school. There everybody was calm and kind to each other. We stayed at the school for two days and on the third day moved into the Foreign Student Centre (FSC) at Kobe University where we stayed for two days.

At the FSC we felt relieved, but badly wanted to bath, eat some warm food and play. But we could not. By this stage our bodies had experienced so many tremors, to the point that every aftershock sent horrible shivers up our spines. My son was scared of every noise, even that of a mere breeze and he would not go to the toilet alone. He stayed close to his mother or I. Our mail box was filled with mail from our friends and relatives all over the world. We had lost weight and terribly wanted to be with our kin. We realised everybody was so kind in the city of Kobe. People shared what they had, even though a thick dark cloud hung over the city. There had been so much destruction to both life and material possessions. It made us feel sick and even more hopeless.

Chronicle of a Kobe Quake Survivor

Eva Maria C. Cutiongco (f) PHILIPPINES
Kobe University

Being a doctor, I have always thought of myself as an outsider who will be called to help in a disaster and not really be the victim of one. That is, until the 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Kobe last January 17, while I was doing my research fellowship there.

The earthquake happened at an unholy hour. We were all awakened from our sleep by a strong jolt and the building swayed for a number of seconds. The quake lasted long enough for us to realize that there was an earthquake and we really didn't know what to do. It was very cold and dark around us but we saw how the strong tremors wreaked havoc in our small house. All our plates, cups and glasses were broken and thrown out of the cabinets. The TV, stereo and all our books were strewn all over the floor. Panic and fear gripped us and we thought of immediately going out of our apartment - that was our first mistake. We sought shelter in the lobby which we found was filled with shattered glass and was not exactly a safe place to be. With each aftershock that followed, we realized that there was nowhere to run to seek sturdy shelter because Japanese homes did not necessarily have beds, high tables or strong doorways (we slept on tatami mats and had no big tables - we had the typical low set ones and our doors were sliding ones made only of paper).

There were fires that started immediately after the quake, burning as big as a whole block of buildings. There was one behind our apartment building and we had to give a hand in a bucket brigade with water being fetched from a nearby brook. Firetrucks have been deployed in so many other areas of fire that our truck arrived quite late. Strong winds and the lack of water hampered their firefighting efforts, so that fires were still breaking out even two to three days after the quake.

After these initial surges of adrenalin, we now faced the bigger problems of life: food and water. Our second mistake was not having enough food stored nor enough containers to store water. There were long queues of people lined up for food such as ramen (instant noodles) and carrot juice and whatever other food the Japanese ate which I was not necessarily familiar with. These were probably the only things, too, that store owners could salvage. Bottled water was out of stock in an instant. We started fetching water from the brook nearby, boiled it and put enough tea bags in to mask its taste. We only stopped drinking this when we started having stomach aches as we just couldn't afford to have diarrhea at that point in time. Water was too precious and trips to the brook to fetch more in the cold winter climate was not necessarily something we looked forward to.

We had no idea how long the situation would last until we saw the damage that the earthquake had done all around us. Old Japanese woden homes were flattened to the ground. Many of the buildings, including the ones where we used to go shopping, like the big co-ops collapsed. Electrical posts were lying on the roads. Elevated rail lines and highway collapsed to the ground, along with the vehicles on them. The death toll was rising. Thousands of people were still missing. And so many more were injured and were being brought to nearby hospitals. It was like a war zone with helicopters hovering above us all the time and sirens which never seemed to stop.

All forms of communication and transportation were cut off. Only those with cars and motorbikes could move around while most of us walked on the railroad tracks, as you probably saw on TV. We did not have any contact with the outside world - and the worry about our parents worrying about us made us very restless and anxious. Being a foreigner, it took time for us to figure out what kind of help and services were available for us. It was difficult hearing all the news in Nihongo and try to figure out the various information they were flashing on the screen which of course was all in Kanji (Chinese characters) and Japanese characters. But, Japan, being a first world country had the electricity back on within 24 hours. The phones took another 48 hours but there was not a continuous service at that stage. It was also after 72 hours before we started to avail drinking water for ourselves from trucks which delivered water at designated areas. Food was also being distributed in evacutaion centres. Traffic was controlled in such a way that only trucks delivering food and water were allowed to enter Kobe.

We eventually had to evacuate to Osaka City for safer shelter, and avaliability of food and water. Epidemics were rising in our area that we thought it best to evacuate as soon as possible. After another day, sick and exhausted, my roommates and I finally went home to our respective countries.

After being in a disaster such as this, I started asking myself what is it that is really important in my life. Is it the accumulation of material possessions? Is it the number of degrees I can attach my name to? Is it the number of scientific papers I can get published? These are all worthless and can be reduced to piles of rubble just like what the earthquake did to a lot of things around us. What will matter in the end is how I have shared myself with others and touched others lives with God's love.

After the Great Hanshin Earthquake

Murat Dogru, M.D. (m) TURKEY

Kobe University

(Translated by Murat Dogru)

I was studying for my doctorate examination. For some reason I felt very nervous, but I thought it was from the stress due to my exams. I looked at my watch. It was 5:45 in the morning. I drank a glass of water and lay down in bed again. Soon after, I felt a violent shake. It started off as a vertical motion, but then it got stronger and started shaking from side to side. My body flew off the bed and I fell on the ground as did the television. I realised it was a very big earthquake that had hit us. Things were falling on me and it was impossible to lie still on the floor. I was living on the ninth floor of a ten storey building which was very near to the epicentre. I think that is why my experience felt so bad. It seemed to last for hours.

When it became quiet, I tried to remain calm. I said to myself "Be calm. You need your passport, Alien Registration Card and your wallet. You must not go outside because another earthquake could come soon." (Thanks to the Foreign Student Centre at Kobe University - they told us what to do in an earthquake.) As I was thinking this, it started to shake very violently again for about five more seconds. I put on some clothes. It was very dark and I had already cut myself many times while searching for my things. Finally, I made it outside. I couldn't believe what I saw. Our beautiful Kobe was on fire. Most of the nearby houses were burning. I used the emergency stairs to escape, as did everyone else. I then heard an ojiichan (old man) calling out. "Help! Obaachan (grandmother) is inside." We dashed inside and dragged her out. She was bleeding and wore only a thin pair of pyjamas, despite the cold of the January night. I went back inside to get some clothes for her and some other neighbours who were freezing. We managed to stop her bleeding. Meanwhile, everywhere around our mansion (apartment building) was on fire. We managed to rescue a woman from a neighbouring house, but we couldn't get to her husband. He burned to death, crying all the time.

I became senseless and numb. I went upstairs again and packed my things, then put my luggage in a nearby Sakura Bank which was offering help. I started walking to the University Hospital where I was studying. I had one last look at my place knowing I could never live there again. The fire alarms were already on. I walked past burning houses, through stations leaking gas, and over cracked roads. I saw many shocked people. I was stopped by a lot of Japanese who asked me if I was OK or needed help. When I felt tired I sat on the pavement and saw my reflection in a pool of water. I had many cuts, and blood and ash all over my face. I ate a piece of sembei (Japanese rice cracker) and kept on walking. It was difficult to tell the directions. It took me four hours to reach the hospital.

People were already forming long lines at Lawson to buy essential food items and to phone their families. I knew I should phone my family too, but I wasn't in a hurry because I knew that due to the time difference they would still be fast asleep. I went to the Outpatient Department to see my bosses Tsujimura and Nakamachi; and then I collapsed. After I rested for a while I started helping the staff with the wounded. That night we had two strong aftershocks. We had already had thousands of aftershocks so we were already used to them. I called my parents later on that night, but a little later than I had planned as the phone lines were down. They were hysterical when I reached them, thanks to CNN.

This may all sound like a chapter from a horror movie. But it can happen to any of us in any

part of the world. The question is "are we ready for the next big one?" The big one we had here in Kobe is no reason for students or people wanting to visit Japan not to come and study, or to cancel their plans. There is no reason to deprive yourselves of the Japanese warmth and love. I never felt alone, and am still fighting even now. We are all fighting together to build a happier future in the ruins of Kobe city.

Home

Duan Yi Ran (m) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Kazuyuki Kiryu)

May 8, 1995

I am a student from China. I lived in Kobe, but lost my accomodation and personal possessions in the Great Hanshin Earthquake. Room 205 in Shohuso Apartments was just four and a haft tatami mats in size, but it was the base of my life. After I lost it, I had to take shelter at refugee centres, and depend on friends for accomodation.

With the strong hope of having a room of my own once again, I made the journey to Osaka. Osaka, especially Umeda, is a huge city full of similar-looking skyscrapers. Here in Osaka, the effective technique I use in Kobe to navigate around town (based on the fact that there are mountains to the north and the sea to the south) fails. Because of the skyscrapers, the blue sky is seen only in the shape of a square and I feel that "Zuo jing guang tian" (I am watching the sky, sitting in a well).

What is more frightening is the underground area. One of the subway stations has twenty-five entrances, and it always makes me think of the movie "Didaozhan" (Fight in the Underground). The difference is that the setting is Japan and it is I who is attacked.

"You should have come a bit earlier, young man."

"Osaka has no accomodation for 50,000 yen."

"I'm very sorry, but we have no rooms available for overseas students."

"Listen, the Chinese guy who lived here last time was bad!"

"Even Japanese haven't found accommodation, you know."

I felt almost desperate as I plodded my way around the city. Another large signboard came into sight. I decided to take my chances, and opened the door.

"May I help you?"

A young assistant came to me. After a short talk with him, he took out the plan of a one-room apartment and showed it to me. The rent was 60,000 yen a month and the key money was 500,000 yen.

"I don't think I can "

The assistant seemed to have understood what I meant, so he called up the landlord. After a lot of arguing back and forth, they agreed on 39,000 yen a month in rent, with 200,000 yen key money.

"You will never come across a better deal, you know!"

"Alright, I'll take it!"

When I looked at my watch, it was already 7:00pm so we didn't have enough time to go and have a look. I paid 5,000 yen as a deposit and promised to bring the rest of the money for the lease the next day.

I wanted to tell my friend my good news and so called him straight away from a pay phone.

"I told you that you would be able to find a place!"

"I have to take a look at it first!"

The next day, taking advice from my friend, I asked to have a look. Taken to the premises by

the assistant whom I had met the previous day, I found myself in front of a five storey building. There was a sign "XXXX Mansions" above the entrance. I stepped inside, to discover cracks all over the walls.

"What's this?"

All my pent-up frustration exploded and I couldn't put up with it any longer.

"Why not get the deposit returned and try and make a fresh start of it?"

Soon after I left the real-estate agency, my mind went blank again. Looking up, I saw the blue sky framed by the skyscrapers. The Shinji Tanimura sang "Sarai" came into my mind.

"My heart trembled when I saw a white cloud drifting away."

"Oh, Ms Zheng."

"What's up Duan?"

I came across a Chinese woman writer I had worked with in Kobe. She said she had found an apartment in Minoh and that there were still some rooms available. She took me there.

When we knocked on the door of the landlord's house, there appeared a woman in her thirties (I later heard that she has a grandchild). When she learned that I was an overseas student from Kobe, she led us inside and even prepared a meal for us. After I told her of my quest for a room, she said that I could live in one of hers for two months, rent free. She said that to do so to all overseas students was the least she could offer.

After the meal, the woman cleaned the room as well. What was more, she provided me with a futon set and other daily necessities. Finally, she put a vase of flowers on the desk. They had green leaves with a small yellow flower in bloom. The flowers weren't expensive, but the vivid green colour and the warm yellow like the light of a heater gave me a feeling of peace and relief. It seemed as if the flower was saying to me, "This is your home, my friend."

Two months later, the day came when I returned to Kobe. I was able to move into a dormitory for employees through the help of the International Student Centre at University. While I was packing, I found the bouquet. The colour of green and yellow had not yet faded. How could it be so full of life with only ordinary water in the vase? Where did it hide energy like that? I said good-bye to the landlord. But the small bouquet still remains in my mind together with the room.

My Experience and God

Jorge Manrique Estrada (M) MEXICO
Kobe University of Commerce
(Translated by Marcia Kono)

Some time has passed since the earthquake that happened in Kobe. But still we can see collapsed buildings, destroyed houses...and some people that are still afraid to talk about it.

When the earthquake happened last January, I was of course frightened and very startled. In that short moment I cried - I was frightened as any human being would have been - but this is nothing special; it was a normal reaction.

Many people asked me if I thought that I was going to die at the time of the earthquake. I always say "YES", because I have never felt such an intense and terrible shaking as this one in Japan. I come from Mexico, which, as everybody knows, also faces intense tremblings, but I had never felt them so 'closely'.

On the day of the earthquake, what woke me up was more the noise than the 'movement'. I still remember the grave, deep noise that the earth made. Seconds later I tried to stand up, but could not due to the shaking.

At that time, feeling myself impotent, anguished and afflicted, I called for God. It is written in the Bible: "Call, and He will answer". So I did, and believe me, God gave me freedom and released me, giving me security. I do not mean physical safety, but spiritual. I was sure that if I had died, it would not have mattered, for I would have been with God.

You probably don't understand what I mean, for it is to know and to be sure of what will happen to you after your physical death. Death will only be physical, not spiritual, as for Christians (like me), the spirit will always last and may go to either heaven or hell.

What I am trying to tell you is also about the careness, peace and the good feeling which was brought to me by God in my despair; in my moment of panic, fear and anguish.

I invite you to meet Jesus Christ; you will find in him a loving, generous comprehensive father. He above all understands us, for he was once as human as we are... the only thing you need to do is to open your heart to God, and he will listen and talk to you. This is not something pretentious; it is the truth. For nobody tells me this, I live it everyday of my life.

Here I finish my report, hoping that one day you too will be able to meet this wonderful God I know. Wishing you all the best, and that God bless you.



中国北京刘 晗

Memories of the Earthquake

Fu Hui Nan (m) CHINA

Kobe University

(Translated by Hannah Lee)

I woke when I hit the wall. Then there was shaking as if there had been a landslide and the ground had burst open. I felt as if I was about to slide down to hell but couldn't do anything about it. I thought it was too late to make a run for it (I still don't know whether it was possible to escape from it), and so I waited for the earthquake to judge my fate. There was no light - all around it was pitch black. I couldn't hear anything except for a loud noise. It was as if all the noises I had been familiar with in the world had ceased to exist.

I waited and each second felt to be overly long. I was being punished and had lost to the choice of nature. Suddenly the earth stopped shaking and it became silent. I felt that I, who had finally manage to survive the disaster had been given the chance to live again. I raced vehemently out of my room and saw from the shocked looks on the faces of the others that they too felt the same way. I was rifled with gratitude, and standing in front of the telephone I yelled through the phone for the first time in my life "Hello, thanks to everyone I survived".

Night came as normal. However the terrible sight of the earthquake was still seen by everyone. All around were the scars, and it was like an exploded minefield. Everywhere the air was filled with the black ash of the fires burning. I heard many voices of people crying.

My heart ached as I witnessed the port town of Kobe now in ruins. Numerous amounts of people were trapped under leaning and collapsed building and lost their lives in the fires that followed. People lost their pride, as well as civilisation and possessions in the earthquake. Bridges collapsed and the surface of the roads became uneven. Society had been brought back to the primitive ages by the threat of nature.

When I saw people rescued from the rubble, I felt moved at the immortality of life. I participated in many rescue operations and gained confidence in the future as I saw people dealing with the disaster calmly, without a glimmer of fear.

Everything has to be rebuilt from scratch, but the human race has eventually won over nature. We should not simply destroy nature in order to conquer over it, but should instead recognise it, and breath together to use it for our needs. We humans belong to nature, but nature does not belong to us. Because nature will forever be, clashes with nature will also continue until the end of time. We have to learn to live together with nature in harmony.

Seeing to the pain

Fukuno, Masumi (f)JAPAN
Officer, International Student Centre
Kinki University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

I wake up at 6 o'clock every morning to the ringing of my alarm. However on the day of the earthquake I was awoken by the annoying sound of my pet dog vomitting. As I yelled "Shut up" at the dog, the terrible earthquake occurred. I thought that it would soon come to an end, however the intensity of the tremors increased gradually and it continued for some time. My room did not suffer much damage apart from displaced books, and hence I did not realise that there would be damage to such an degree around Kobe and Awajishima.

I got up and switched on the TV immediately. Through the news I came to learn about the gravity of the situation. As time passed, the death toll continued to increase. I felt goose bumps all over my body whilst watching the live telecast from the affected areas.

On the day of the earthquake I could not go to my office as the transportation system was paralyzed. I went to my office the next day and found that window panes all over the university had been broken. It made me realise, once again, the gravity of the earthquake.

The International Student Centre started to get in touch with the students residing in and around Kobe and made arrangements to get them to the university. As it was very difficult to locate a great number of them, the centre started contacting their close friends, heads of foreign students organisations and the local guardians of the foreign students. Despite all such efforts, only half of the students whereabouts were confirmed. Friends and local guardians of the missing students were called and requested to inform the International Centre if they received any communication from them. This exercise helped a lot in establishing direct contact with such students. A large number of students took refuge in nearby schools.

On asking the students as to how they were, their reactions were as varied as "It's cold", "I'm hungry", "I am thirsty", to "I want to go back home", and "What should I do about my exam tomorrow?" (A large number of students were worried about their exams as it was the examination period). We asked them to come to Osaka, however most of them expressed their inability to do so as the roads were chaotic, crowded with people, vehicles and rubble thus making it difficult to walk - let alone drive. The train services were also disrupted. The aftershocks were occurring frequently and due to this everyone was afraid of walking on the streets. Large queues were formed before public telephones. As most of the students did not have telephone cards they were making calls using coins, but due to the limited amount, the line was cut-off in between calls. On talking to these students I felt myself to be helpless. I acutely felt that if I had a helicopter at my disposal I would have flown to them to help out.

The heads of the Foreign Students Organisations of various countries were trying their best to organise temporary accomodation for the earthquake stricken students in Osaka. On the fourth or fifth day after the earthquake they circulated around various refugee camps in search of foreign students and made arrangements to take them to temporary accomodation being arranged in Osaka. After about a week had passed, most of the earthquake sticken foreign students were provided with accomodation in Osaka.

The International Student Centre strived to find temporary accomodation for the students who had taken shelter with friends or were in similar situations. Efforts were organised such as those by Osaka kokusai koryu sentaa (Osaka International House Foundation), Osaka kokusai koryu zaidan (Osaka Foundation of International Exchange), Ryugakusei shien kigyo suishin kyokai (Corporate Friendship Network for Foreign Students) etc, and as a result within two weeks the earthquake stricken students were able to move into international student houses and dormitories run by private companies for their employees etc. There were quite a few students who insisted that they could not part form their colleagues and so refused to move to Osaka.

The reactions of the foreign students after the earthquake were varied. "This is the first time in my life that I have experienced such a terrible event", "I was alone and it was dark; I thought that I would die", "The Japanese people at the refugee camp were very kind and that made me pleased", "At the time of food distribution at the camp, some of the Japanese complained that I was getting more food than them. Their attitude towards foreigners hurt me a lot.", "At first, on knowing that many of my neighbouts had died, I felt very sad and frightened - however when I saw dead bodies with my own eyes, I lost all my senses", "When I was walking to Osaka for shelter I felt thirsty and hence dropped into a supermarket. A big dog was kept at the entrance and as I proceeded into the shop, the owner came out and told me exhorbitant prices, such as bottles of juice for 3000 yen, biscuits 2000 yen, sausages 5000 yen I could not buy anything as I did not have that much money. I felt sad at such behaviour."

Although I was talking to the affected students, I was totally confused as to how to communicate with them, since we in Osaka especially, had hardly experienced any damage. I thought that the students would not like to recall their terrible experiences and hence I decided not to ask them about the earthquake. On saying "it was terrible" to sympathise with them, some students just nodded and burst into tears, while others narrated their personal experiences. I tried to encourage them, saying "Don't worry. Everything will be fine" and with that most seemed to relax a little.

Some foreign students in Osaka, though not adversely affected by the earthquake, suffered from shock as they had lost friends in Kobe. They were nervous and some had to leave their jobs temporarily. As a foreign student counsellor, I acutely felt the inavailability of a manual which could have guided me to respond to the affected students and appropriately pacify the shock they had received.

This is the first time the people of Kansai have experienced an earthquake of this scale. I think that as a university and an International Student Centre, we responded somewhat too late. Through our mistakes we have learnt what an International Student Centre should do in such a situation. Newspaper and television played an effective role in providing a lot of useful information for us regarding the affected students, however it was in a scattered form and thus difficult to process. We found that many students did not even know about financial assistance or risai shomeisho (a certificate issued by the governmental authorities certifying that the concerned person had suffered damage due to the earthquake).

I think that some kind of forum or organisation (maybe an International Exchange Centre) should be set up which can promptly provide information about foreign students in a more organised manner.

Finally I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the earthquake stricken Japanese as well

as foreign students, foreign student counsellors, teachers and staff of the earthquake affected universities in and around Kobe and sincerely pray for an early recovery.

The Incurable Wound

Han Ji Yi (M), CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by John Stormon)

I am certain that when talking about Zhi Bin Mu, foreign students who live in Kobe and the many Japanese and overseas friends who feel for the foreign students who have endured this great earthquake, will immediately feel something. This is the tragedy of the heartless robbing of twenty two young foreign students lives by the fiendish Great Hanshin Earthquake. With the passing of time, people may forget them. However, having experienced the earthquake and as a true friend of Zhi Bin, I can never ever forget. The spirit of Zhi Bin, who is now in heaven, is surely asking something of me. He must want to know what kind of injury he endured. Of course he wants to know all that has taken place. Now, I will retrace my experience and recall all the events that took place in those few days, and console the soul of my fellow countryman and school friend, Zhi Bin Mu.

The day before the earthquake I returned from a trip to meet my parents and family in China. As I hadn't completed my course thesis, that night I immediately left my room, went to university and set about finishing it. On the way to university I rang Zhi Bin Mu twice. He wasn't home, so the first time I left a message on his answering machine -- "Won't you come and spend the night with me at University?" We could help each other with computer problems and moreover I had a gift that I had brought with me, that I wanted him to eat. I knew that he always studied throughout the night, so I gave him a second call at about eleven o'clock that night, just as he returned home. I again told him my idea but he replied, "I'm very tired after today. I don't want to go to university tonight. Let's meet tomorrow." In this way he declined the plans I had earlier entered into his answering machine. After this I returned to my research room and continued on my manuscript, in front of the computer, all the way through until four o'clock in the morning. Having reached a point near the completion of my work, and my body tired from the long haul, I drew up my seat and there I fell asleep. But who could have predicted it? For, before I even had enough time to start dreaming, the devil like Great Hanshin Earthquake struck without warning.

I fled the building and from the University's park at the foot of Mt. Roko I saw crimson red flames already engulfing several areas. It was at this point that I first felt the severity of the earthquake. Immediately I thought of rushing to help, but then I thought that the Fire Department would have already been on their way. When I think about how much help I would have been if I had rushed down, the mere thought instantly fades away.

The aftershocks continued intermittently. Having seen that students were taking refuge in the University, I returned to my research room. After a small clean up of the room which had furniture and equipment scattered everywhere, I went back to sleep on my chair for roughly two hours. Once it became light, teachers and students started to arrive at University and we were able to find out more about the safety of other teachers, friends and family. Two Mechanical Engineering teachers came quickly from their far away homes and commenced checking the safety of each of the research room members by distributing charts, which we were instructed to fill out. At the this time, as I was the only person from my room present, I assumed the duty of inquiring into the safety of the other members of my room by telephone.

After that I contacted several other Chinese foreign students. Some were all right. Others could not be contacted due to the disruption to the telephone lines. I tried to ring Zhi Bin Mu, but there was no connection. In the areas that had suffered severe damage most of the telephone lines would not connect at all. I couldn't think of how to contact him. Still, from the bottom of my heart I honestly felt that he was safe. Surely he was able to escape. Maybe he could have

been injured. Various indifferent thoughts floated through my mind. Well, if he was suffering there's nothing I could do. If he was injured then surely he would be helped and would go to a hospital. His sister also lives in Kobe and his cousin lives close to Kobe, so they would know his address. They'll go and see how he is. Besides, each research room has its own safety inquiry. Most probably Zhi Bin isn't in trouble at all. He's all right. I don't have his address, so even if I went to help him I won't be able to do anything Thinking in this way that there wasn't any more that I could do, I sat down in front of the computer and resumed my studies. Really I should have tried to contact his research room in an effort to search for Zhi Bin, but why didn't I do it? Furthermore, I easily passed on this important task to his relatives and fellow researchers. When I think about it all, I honestly can't believe I did that. In such an extreme and dangerous time, all I could do was think about my work and my own existence. On top of this, I never thought that I should be doing things for other people. I didn't even ring my parents in China, nor my wife, and they would have been worried about my safety. Well, it can be said in my defence that I really hadn't experience anything like this before. While I had an interest in the news, the number of victims over the first two or three days didn't really surprise me, and I had no way of foreseeing the possible overall death toll. Therefore I wasn't able to give an appropriate reaction to the damage caused by the earthquake.

With all the transport services being in a state of paralysis, it was necessary that I remain at University, and I managed to last out the first two days with food that I always had with me, but on the third day I decided to return to my place in Nishi-Ku. My relatives, there, were very worried and had wanted me to return earlier. A Fourth Year student from the same research room drove me to Sannomiya and from there I walked all the way to Suma. On the way I passed through the worst hit areas and I came to understand more fully the serious impact and the overall damage of the this great earthquake. Although Sannomiya is usually a very lively place, I couldn't bear the surrounding ghastly sights. The housing in Nagata was reduced to nothing but ash and the amount of white smoke was enough to silence the sorrowful tear filled voices.

While I was in Sannomiya I deliberately stopped off at the City Office because I truly felt with all my heart that I could help, even just a little, with the relief campaign. Seeing the workers one after another systematically moving the relief supplies, I thought that I might join their line. However, for some reason I wasn't included and thus feeling like a true foreigner(gaijin) I ceased my efforts. The truth be known, I still hadn't been driven to the point of necessity.

I waited for my relatives to come and pick me up from a shelter in Suma. Just at this time relief supplies arrived and at this place people were carrying their own supplies. I too joined the line and for the first time I lost that 'foreigner' feeling. I didn't help much, but surely it was enough to be able to say that I worked as a volunteer.

When I returned to my place in Nishi-Ku, I started to make phone calls to University friends whom I hadn't contacted yet. I rang Zhi Bin, but of course I couldn't get through. Although I was able to somehow reach most of the people that I came into contact with at University, I wasn't able to contact Zhi Bin and one other friend. This time I remember having a premonition that I should contact Zhi Bin's sister, so tried in vain to find the phone number of her previous house. I even asked friends from University, but none of them knew it.

At last, on the ninth day after the earthquake I heard from a fellow Kobe University student the news about Zhi Bin that I didn't want to hear. Zhi Bin Mu had been a victim of the earthquake. The next day I went by bicycle to University and got his address and his sister's phone number from his research room. Then, with a map in hand I searched for Zhi Bin's disaster struck place. It was in Nada-Ku, an area more severely hit than most, directly above the crack zone. It was certainly in a more tragic condition than my own Nishi-Ku. Most of the two story buildings had been razed to the ground, while those that were still standing were missing

walls and in dangerous states. In what use to be a two story house, the second floor had collapsed and the first floor had been completely crushed. The caretaker showed me Zhi Bin's room which was one of a couple of rooms on the first floor and having dug through the debris of the second floor I finally found it.

According to the caretaker, originally four people had lived on the first floor. On the night before the earthquake one of the occupants had gone out and hadn't returned, and another was at the time of the earthquake delivering newspapers. Thus, at the time of the collapse, only two people, the caretaker and Zhi Bin, were caught. The caretaker was rescued some five hours later. It seems that the furniture in the room of the caretaker had provided a space against the fallen second floor, which obviously had helped him. He wasn't even injured.

When I looked at Zhi Bin's place, I found that there was hardly, if any, space beneath the fallen boards. There was even lumps of blood on his quilt. Other than that, I couldn't see anything. Most probably he had been caught by the fallen second floor such that he couldn't move, and then died of suffocation.

After receiving permission from the caretaker I searched for some of Zhi Bin's things to send to his parents for him, and in the end found a suit. Yes, it certainly was his. A couple of Japanese students who were in the same research room as Zhi Bin came and laid flowers. We had a discussion and decided to search as much as possible for Zhi Bin's belongings. However, because the first floor was so severely crushed we weren't able to recover anything other than the bag he always carried on his shoulder and a few articles of clothing.

After the others returned, I stayed and stared at the gap where Zhi Bin must have perished and imagined how he would have died. I also took several photos of the ruins. Later I contacted Zhi Bin's sister and cousin, and said to them, "If there is anything that you want me to do please tell me. I will exhaust any and every avenue to help. Furthermore, I'll think of a way to retrieve Zhi Bin's important belongings."

However, his sister replied "There is no need to worry," and the very next day she returned to China with Zhi Bin's remains

I met with Zhi Bin's cousin in Kobe and gave her some photos that I had of Zhi Bin. We were going to go back to the disaster struck area and search once more for some articles of Zhi Bin, but because she was busy with work she was never able to make it.

After a few days, I received word from a fellow Chinese foreign student that the Chinese General Consulate in Osaka was going to have a memorial service for the Chinese foreign student victims. I informed a number of Zhi Bin's friends and his cousin, in the hope that as many people as possible might come. However, when the actual day of the service came, they weren't able to attend due to work commitments and the like. In the end only my friend who had told me about the service and I went.

The service was of course an emotional time for me as I kept on seeing images of Zhi Bin and recalling his friends' actions and attitudes from when he was alive. Finally I wasn't able to endure the grief any longer and burst into tears. "Zhi Bin Mu, your death is too sudden. And I didn't help. Nobody helped you. Not even I! And now you have left this world, and are in that cold, cold world."

A journalist asked of me, "What are you saying to Zhi Bin?" to which I replied, "I didn't do all I could have done for you. I cannot call myself your friend. If I were a true friend, I would have explored every avenue in a effort to find you after you had been

declared missing. And it wasn't only me. The people who you thought were your friends are guilty too. At that time we didn't make every effort to rescue you."

According to Zhi Bin's cousin, an autopsy revealed that Zhi Bin, having been trapped and pressured in the first floor, and eventually suffocated within ten minutes. But I don't believe that this is the case. Despite the fact that it is so obvious that I should have gone and searched for him earlier than the fourth day after the earthquake, when he was actually found by the Self Defense Forces, I never went to his place. I don't blame just myself, but also the people who were connected with Zhi Bin. Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Especially Zhi Bin's sister. In times such as earthquakes everyone knows that the most important people are your own flesh and blood. Why did you forget your own brother and think only of yourself? Although you are married to a Japanese, surely you haven't forgotten your own brethren.

Of course when the earthquake happened you didn't have time to worry about other people because you were concerned about your own safety. However, that doesn't mean that you don't recognize others. This world is too callous. People's relationships are all based on money and everyone is using everyone else. No longer can you see people foregoing themselves in the hope of helping others and having a warm heart.

Zhi Bin and I have been permanently separated. But his voice and smiling face are ever present in my mind. He was a serious and hard worker. After studying as a research student for six months, he passed the entrance exam for Kobe University's Doctor Course. His adviser had the highest regard for him and even before entering the course proper he had already decided his research theme and had taken positive steps in his preparation. He had already read the fundamental books relating to his research. Even amongst foreign students he was a rarity. At the time when he was burning with ambition, progressing to his Masters and vigorously exhibiting his own talents in the field of machine manufacturing, calamity unfortunately fell upon him. It should be said that not only have the Chinese people lost an outstanding young man, but also Japan and China suffered a grave loss on exchange and friendship frontiers.

Zhi Bin Mu, you have passed away from this world, and your death has left a mounting regret in us all. If on that night you would have come to University, if straight after the earthquake you were helped just that little bit sooner

What kind of lessons can be learnt from Zhi Bin Mu's death? I think there are many. It has sounded alarm bells regarding relationships and experiences. People's relations have become cold-hearted and in times of disaster there is less mutual sympathy and willing to help. Let us refrain from relationships which are based on money. Everyone, gather up your love and dedicated hearts, and retrieve your spirit and our humanity.

Memories

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The start of 1995 was quite nice. Soon after the new year I went on a foreign students skiing trip in Nagano. We relaxed and had fun for several days. The spring seemed as if it was going to be full of nice things to do before I would return to Finland to continue my studies there.

On Monday after the trip I stayed home and slept; I was tired. However, on Tuesday I forced myself to go to university as it was the day of our seminar and my Japanese class. That day was quite quiet; my German friend Peter had not yet returned from his Christmas holiday in Europe. Lwin-san, one of the girls from Myanmar was there, but her friend Khin didn't come. Lwin told me that Khin was busy finishing her reports and so could not come. She was planning to take the entrance exam this spring, so she had a lot of things to do. In addition to her major she was studying English and Spanish. It was difficult to study as she didn't know many kanji (Chinese characters) yet. Both of them were working in a shop to finance their life in Japan so they did not have so much free time.

Lwin had decided to return Myanmar this spring. She was a little worried about her future, as it is difficult to find good work there. Last autumn she made a long trip to United States where she met some of her friends who had emigrated there. She wanted to make yet another trip abroad before going home; she thought about Australia, USA and Europe. It is difficult to go abroad after returning to Myanmar as it would require a lot of paperwork and money.

That Friday we spoke about returning home. She was thinking about shipping her things home and she wondered about the price. She said she would like to take her bicycle with her, and that she also wanted to buy a karaoke equipment. I hadn't known earlier that she was interested in karaoke.

I asked her if she would like to go and have some coffee, but she was busy. She was going to Sannomiya to do something, so we said goodbye. On Friday we would meet anyway so we could make plans about our party. The party was to be held in Peter's apartment, and many of the students from our Friday's Intermediate A Japanese class, including the teacher, would come.

We had had one party earlier; it was in my place last autumn. At that time our class was very small and the party was even smaller; just me, the teacher, Khin and Choo from Taiwan. Lwin had been in the USA and we did not manage to contact the other students, like Luiz and Chin.

During the previous summer our group was like a small family, probably because of it's small size and informal atmosphere. We had even planned a camping trip to Hokkaido, but then Choo went home for summer, Chin's friend from USA came, Luiz went to Bali and Lwin fixed her travel plans to USA. We looked at some leaflets with Khin and she showed a home video that her friend had shot in Hokkaido earlier. The idea of going to Hokkaido together felt a little strange, especially because it was supposed to be camping trip. We decided to forget the trip for that summer and perhaps plan a new one for some other time.

Anyway, while Lwin was away, I met with Khin several times as both of us didn't have much to

do. She prepared Myanmarese food sometimes, we also went shopping and saw some places in Kobe together. She told me several things about her country and family, about her earlier work at a hotel and so on. She also told me her age, which had always been some kind of secret. I decided to keep it that way.

Friday 13th I was walking to university from Hankyu Rokko station when I met my friend from Indonesia. He said that it was an examination day at university and so there weren't any classes. That was bad. How could we organise our party, as we had not fixed the time and several people did not know how to get to Peter's place. I decided to go to the class anyway as the other students probably didn't know about the exam either.

Peter was already waiting there. Soon several other people came. "What, no class?" was a typical reaction. We decided to write the directions to Peter's place on the blackboard, as maybe somebody would come to the classroom late. We made calls to those students whose numbers we knew and asked them to come next day.

We decided that Peter and I would go shopping with Khin and Lwin that day and would then take the food and cooking utensils to Takarazuka. The next day we would get the drinks while the other two would buy the meat with Luiz and Nikolay before coming to our place.

After the meeting we went out to eat. On Fridays, Peter and I often had lunch with Lwin and Khin and Kanzaki-sensei, when we would then talk about food and many other things. One popular topic was exotic Asian foods like fried dogs and bugs. Khin gave us sometimes very colourful descriptions about foods popular among some minorities in rural Myanmar. She herself did not eat meat, so she often brought her own obento (Japanese boxed lunch) into restaurants. Peter and I always got some samples; the taste was quite nice. As I was used to Thai food, I didn't think Myanmar food was hot at all.

After eating, the four of us went to Mikage; it was first time for Peter to go there. Both Lwin and Khin lived in the first floor of a big apartment block called Gunke Mansions. Two of their friends also lived there; Aye Thin Thlaung on the first floor and Moe Moe Hla on the second floor. I had met them briefly before, but didn't know so much about them.

At Khin's place we listened some traditional music from Myanmar. She said that her favourites were the older songs, as opposed to the newer ones. The girls said that they go to karaoke from time to time, and we decided to go together some time. Lwin brought the pictures she had taken in the USA. There was quite a lot of them in San Francisco, LA, Atlanta as well as at some national parks. She seemed to have had a very nice holiday there.

After some time we decided to do the shopping. We visited several shops and bought quite a large amount of food. We were wondering if we could really eat it all. Lwin was selecting ingredients such as the sauces. She said that the expensive stuff was the best, although we were not so convinced. To make her happy we let her to choose what she wanted; cooking was the main passion in her life. One time she had said that she loves eating delicious food so much that she could never consider dieting.

We also visited the shop where Lwin and Khin normally had their part-time job. I had seen the place sometimes, but this was the first time I had been inside. I was wondering what their friends in the shop would say about us afterwards. The shop was close to Hanshin station, so I had often passed by it with Khin. When coming back late from our trips to Kobe, Khin was sometimes

going to be late for work. I would wait on the other side of the road when she went into the shop and told stories about her being busy at university and so on. I remember the time when we went to Kyoto. Khin took a long time to create a cover-up story. First she planned to say she had got a flu, but then she thought the owner might call her in the evening. I think finally she told him something about having important lectures at the university.

After shopping we had coffee at Khin's place. We had a discussion about German biscuits as Khin had found a box of them somewhere. Lwin liked the taste, and she asked Peter to send more of them for her sometimes. Peter promised to give her some chocolate the next day so she was quite happy. After the coffee we had to go home, as the girls had to go to work and we had to take the food to Takarazuka before our Japanese class.

Saturday was nice. We prepared the food at Peter's place, and Lwin was especially active. She complained that we were just drinking beer and did not participate enough. We took some photos when she was preparing the vegetables for nabe. Khin was more relaxed and she made some jokes about Lwin. Anyway, we had fun. Khin and Lwin were the only girls there; Haku-san from China had injured herself on her bicycle so she was not able to come. Kanzaki-sensei was there and he liked the big ball Peter was using as a chair a lot. When we started to cook, Lwin had some beer too. She said that she had to get full value for her money. She liked Peter's Abba cds - another new thing we learnt about her. We listened to music and ate for seven hours - that has to be some kind of record.

In the evening Khin came to my place, just across the garden. I demonstrated how to use my telescope, as the sky was clear and there was a full moon. She and Kanzaki were also looking at some new Japanese books I had bought. Khin saw my video tape collection and asked me to lend her "Black Rain" as she had missed it when it was shown in TV. We decided to watch it some day. She was happy when she noticed that I kept her Christmas card on my table. The card was very pretty.

Lwin and Khin were the last guests to remain. We took some photos and talked a lot. We were talking about taking a trip to Myanmar sometime in the future. We made short-term plans to visit Ise together at the end of January. We planned to talk more about details the next week.

It was getting late so Peter and I went to the station with them and helped to carry the portable gas-stove, nabe and other things we had borrowed from them. The train came and we said good bye, waving our hands as the train left the station. It was late Saturday evening and the sky was full of stars.

On Tuesday morning at 05:46 a strong earthquake hit the Kobe area. The first floor of Gunke Mansions collapsed immediately and it was flattened to about half a metre high. Wai Moe Lwin and Khin Thet Swe were severely injured, and died.

Two Strange Months in my Life

I was half sleeping and had just seen some strange dreams. Little by little I started to notice that I had probably already woken up and this was not a dream. The room was shaking strongly, but I felt very tired. Hmm, it seems to be an earthquake and a very strong one. Interesting, just like

some catastrophe movie. I guess that I have to get up from bed and try to protect myself. All the stuff seems to be falling down, I guess everything inside the kitchen has already collapsed. The walls are making funny sounds when they move under the pressure. They might break at some moment. The ceiling might come down soon, I think I should go under the door as they always claim that those places are stronger and safer during the quakes. I crawled towards the door and placed myself close to it, next to a strong chair and a small shelf. It wasn't much help as the whole place was trembling so strongly. I noticed that all the stuff which had been on the shelf had fallen down; some of them were now between the shelf and the wall. Shit, if I survive I have to re-organise all my kanji-study cards that seem to be over the room. I have to be careful not to smash my glasses and watch which are somewhere on the floor.

After some moments the shaking stopped and then it was silent. It seemed that I did not die after all. I looked out the window and the neighbouring building also seemed OK. Good, then Peter and Sakane should also be alive. Everything is quite dark. Hmm. 05:46, very early. Should I continue sleeping and decide what to do in the morning? The electricity is cut off and I can not do anything. It is cold so I do not want to go outside. On the other hand, gas might be leaking and the house could start burning. Other people will probably start making some noise soon, so I would not be able to sleep anyway. Maybe it is better to wake up even though I feel so tired.

I found my glasses on the floor. The bookshelf seemed to have fallen onto the floor, as did the radio, TV and everything else. My shortwave radio seems to be under the bookshelf, but the shelf is too heavy and I can not lift it up. This is a positive sign; if the shelf had fallen in the other direction I would have been seriously injured. Where is my flash-light? I always keep it next to my bed so I can use it during landslides or earthquakes. Ah, seems to be difficult to find it under all the things. Better turn off the gas and electricity first. I dressed myself, as I did not want to catch a cold. Better to stay fit as diseases would start to spread soon. There must be a huge amount of people who died in the area and society would be dysfunctional for some time. I remember the quakes in Iran and other places. At those times the TV was full of the news about people standing in the front of tents in the snow. This is like those asphalt warriors and other "The Day After" movies. Now I have the chance to put all those survival strategies into practice.

The room in the middle was relatively OK, as there were not so much furniture in it. The camera seems to be on my Japanese table, nice. It is as expensive as all the other things in my home put together. It should be OK, and now I can take some photos of the catastrophe. This is the chance of a lifetime.

The kitchen looks messy, although I can not see much. The fridge is in the middle of the room; it has moved over half a metre. There seems to be broken glass and dishes everywhere. I manage to get into the other room and I close the gas valves. The stove did not drop on to the floor so gas did not leak.

The cupboard has also moved and everything from it has fallen. It was good that my table was too big for my kitchen, as it prevented the cupboard from falling and so some of my things survived. After some minutes of cleaning I managed to open my door. I had always hated that door, why does it have to open inwards? It has always been difficult to open, as shoes and other things are in front of it.

Outside one part of the wall has fallen down and smashed some bicycles. The stairs look a bit damaged. My neighbour is already outside and seems to be OK. Soon some other people come out - the person in charge of the building walks around to check the damage. Soon I meet Peter

and Sakane, they are OK but their rooms are in a total mess. I borrow Sakane's flashlight and go back to my apartment. Now it is easy to find my own flash light. I get the radio out, but it does not work. It looks OK, but the batteries are too weak. I have to wait for new batteries before I can see if it is OK. My camera seems to be OK; I take pictures inside my apartment and nearby. I should start taking more pictures after sunrise.

Peter went to get his camera. I am little suprised that I can not see any fires. I had thought that there would be at least some burning buildings as every household uses gas. In Finland gas is not used and all people consider it very dangerous. I wonder what the other places look like.

We walked around our neighbourhood. Several fences had collapsed and there were many cracks in the road. The Hankyu railway tracks were badly bent, and the trains would not be running for several weeks. We saw more damaged roads where the asphalt had broken into pieces. Several buildings had damaged walls and roofs and we also saw some collapsed houses. Later some ambulances came, as there were many injured people. Close to the mountains some gardens had sunk up to nearly one metre, and cars were unable to get to the road. There was also a wide crack next to railway track where a car had fallen into it.

A man was listening to his portable radio. We heard that the centre of the quake had been close to Awaji island and the magnitude was around 7. So, that's it for Kobe, I thought. What does Awaji Island look like if it looks like this here?

We tried to help the owner of a sake shop lift an Asahi beer machine up, but it was too heavy. We always had used that one when we wanted beer at night. Another man warned us that the shaken-up bottles could easily explode, so we gave up. The owner said that he had heard news that several buildings had collapsed in Kobe and there were many fires.

When we went back home the electricity was on again. I lifted the TV from the floor and tried to turn it On. At first there was no picture. Then I noticed that the plugs had been pulled out from the sockets. After reconnecting them, the picture came on and the TV started to show images of destruction. I took an empty videotape and started to record the news. The first estimates of the dead and injured were not very realistic considering what I had seen with my own eyes.

I filled all my empty bottles with water, as the water supply would probably stop soon. I was right; later the water was cut off. People were queuing behind telephones, and the lines were jammed. I was wondering how everyone ignored all education; they always said in school that the usage of telephones is not allowed during catastrophes. Perhaps it was better to buy some food and drinks if I could find an open shop.

On TV I saw some scenes from Mikage. Buildings were in bad condition, most of them totally destroyed. There were huge fires in the area. How are my friends who lived so close to that place? How is another friend who lives next to the collapsed highway in Ashiya? Peter and I decided to walk to Nishinomiya and try to find our Chinese friend who was living there. We packed our cameras and film with us and started the trip south.

The route was quite easy going. The evening before, we had been in Sannomiya and we had had some cocktails in "Bar Isn't It ?" We got free drinks from some Korean girls who had been a little bit drunk. It was quite nice and we stayed there until late. When we were walking to the station I remembered that on national holidays the train timetables convert to the Sunday times, so one should leave Sannomiya early. It was possible to get to Nishinomiya Kitaguchi, but the last train

to Takarazuka would have gone before we would arrive at Nishinomiya. I was right and so we had to walk home. I did not want to use a taxi as it would be expensive. It took 50 minutes to Obayashi but we had a chance to see the neighbourhood for the last time. We went to sleep at around one o'clock, so after all the drinking and walking, the early morning wake-up was quite nasty.

When walking towards Nishinomiya we saw more damage. Already in Nigawa there was much more destruction. Near Kotoon the scene was even worse, with many collapsed buildings. The big building close to the station which had been full of shops had lost its lowest floor. The second floor I knew well as my friend had an apartment there. She did not live there; it was used as an English school for children. I did not see her, and I hoped she was cleaning her home if she was OK. I was wondering what the death toll will be.

Near Mondo Yakujin and Nishinomiya Kitaguchi the amount of totally collapsed homes was even greater. Some of the ruins had fallen over the Hankyu tracks. We saw the smoking remains of some homes and there was the smell of gas everywhere.

While walking around Nishinomiya we saw a shop that was open. There were a lot of people inside and most of the things had already been sold out. We managed to buy the last lot of cup-noodles and some sausages and biscuits. We ate some of the food while walking. It was difficult to find our friend's place as he had always picked us up from the station. After some wandering around I noticed the Co-op store and my friend's apartment next to it.

The place seemed to have survived well. That was good, as there were several collapsed homes in the area. We knocked on the door and my friend came out. He was alright, as was his apartment. Several things had fallen down and there was broken glass and plates in kitchen, but the destruction could have been greater. He was a little nervous and was wondering what to do. He wanted to leave Japan soon and go back to China. Luckily his wife and child were in Beijing at the moment so they were not in danger. They had already been speaking by telephone and relatives in China had been very worried.

As it was already afternoon, I decided to call my parents. It was early morning in Finland, so most people did not know anything about the earthquake yet. I managed to make the call. I told them that there was a small quake and some parts of the city had been destroyed, but I was not in danger. My parents said that they would watch the morning news on television, as there would probably be something about it. I said I would call again another day when I knew more about the situation.

After the call we stayed at my friends place for some time and ate some chocolate and biscuits. We had to leave early as we had at least a one and half hour walk back and it would soon be dark. In many areas there was no electricity so the city would be dark.

While walking back we saw more destroyed areas. We saw the remains of the shinkansen (bullet train) tracks and the expressway, where the concrete was crushed and the steel structures had bent like grass. In one place the concrete leg of a shinkansen track had sunk into the earth at least half a metre. The old houses seemed to have suffered the most and some of them were just piles of timber and roof-tiles. We found a newspaper and it gave new estimates of the number of victims. At that time the figure was a little over 400. We did not believe it, as our area alone looked very bad.

In the evening we ate some instant noodles and drank beer. We did not have water but luckily my fridge was full of beer. There had been sale of imported beer in Daiei and I had bought one of each type to taste them. Now they were useful, I was already planning to use beer for cup noodles after the water ran out. The dinner was good in spite of the aftershocks that shook my apartment from time to time. At times I switched my kerosene heater off and was ready to run for it. We had heard that there was a danger of strong aftershock so I was planning a quick escape through the window.

At evening I tried to call my friends in Ashiya and Mikage, but with no success. The tone was normal, but there was no answer. Peter and I wondered if the telephone had been torn away from the wall or if the wall was torn away from the telephone. As the latter alternative was not so unrealistic we were worried. I was thinking about going to Ashiya and Mikage immediately, but I knew I could not find the way in the dark. I decided to sleep and start the trip early in the morning. The night was not so nice, and the aftershocks woke me several times, I was wondering about the fate of my friends. Pictures on the TV had shown burning buildings close to Mikage and I was thinking about it all night.

In the morning I started the walk. By train it would have been 40 minutes, now I was guessing how long it would take. Peter went by his bicycle as he wanted to visit Rokko. He promised to check Mikage on his way.

From Nishinomiya-Kitaguchi I went west following the Hankyu tracks. There was a great exodus of people walking towards Osaka; several of them had been walking for hours. There were salarymen (businessmen) with suit and suitcase, mothers carrying their children and old people pulling small bags with wheels. It was like the American movie about the time when the Khmer Rouge took power in Cambodia and citizens had to leave the cities and march to the countryside.

One reason for the people leaving was that there was a leakage of gas somewhere near the harbour. They had shown maps on TV during the morning of several areas in Ashiya and Higashi-Nada-ku where people were ordered to be evacuated. I was wondering if the police or army would stop me. All the other people were walking in the opposite direction.

Near Shukugawa I saw the collapsed Hankyu-railway tracks. It was just like after an air-raid. One big building was about to collapse over the rails. It was difficult to find passable roads, so I climbed over the fence and started to walk on the railway tracks like several other people. I walked all the way to Ashiya station where I left the tracks. There I made my way towards my friend's place. It was difficult to find the way. There were not many people about, as most had left the area because of the gas. They had said on TV that in the case of an explosion, the fireball would be one or two hundred metres high, then the wind would start to spread the fire. I thought I could run fast enough if that happened.

I selected small roads and avoided other people. I knew that in Europe police would block the roads and it would be impossible to enter the area. However, I did not face any problems. Everything was in such chaos that nobody was interested in what other people were doing.

I saw several television crews with their cameras and satellite antennas. They were broadcasting from the area around the collapsed Hahshin highway. The highway itself was quite a sight and I took several photographs myself. When I used pedestrian bridge under the highway I had to be careful of my head because the highway over the bridge had partly collapsed. At that time I was able to walk where I pleased and nobody tried to stop me. Many of the wealthy neighbourhoods

around had been totally destroyed. It was like a surrealistic dream.

Finally I found my friends place. She was not there, but the building looked fine. That was good, because I thought she had probably left the apartment and moved to a friend's place. I wrote a note and left it there and then started to walk towards Mikage. I went west and saw more and more damaged or destroyed buildings. Several big houses had collapsed, with cars crushed under them. The railways looked just as bad and they would not be in operation for a long time.

After some time I found the area close to Hankyu Mikage. It was impossible to use several roads as buildings had collapsed over them. Electrical wires were hanging from broken poles and there was glass everywhere. Most of the area close to my friends place had burnt and smoke was still coming from the ruins. I saw an old man who was just standing there and watching, perhaps he had lost his home and maybe family members.

I tried to locate my friends apartment, but I did not succeed. The whole neighbourhood had changed totally and it was impossible to recognise buildings. I walked around for nearly an hour, but without luck. My legs started to feel tired and there was still three hours to walk back home. I had to return, it would be dark anyway before I would be back in Takarazuka.

Somehow I felt again the same feeling as the previous day, when I had watched television. From my earlier experiences I knew what it would mean, from now on I would just need to verify it. I bought beer from an operating vending machine close to Mikage station and started to walk towards home along the railway tracks. Soon I was half drunk and my legs were in bad condition, but I just walked without caring.

I arrived home late in the evening, after ten or eleven hours of walking. I met Peter who had visited the university. The university was OK, as well as our friends living by it. In Mikage he had also not found the right place. We decided that the next day I would try to buy a bicycle, then we could do the trip more easily. The trains would not be running for a long time anyway. On TV we saw new estimates about the number of dead. It was already close to two thousand, and greater figures were expected. Nagata-ku, to the west of Kobe was still burning and several people trapped in ruins had died in flames.

The next day we mainly rested and visited central Takarazuka and saw some minor damage. We managed to buy new film and videotapes so my documenting project could continue. Together with our neighbour Sakane-san, we found a good bicycle and after testing it briefly I bought it. On Friday we would visit the university and then go to Sannomiya. We would also visit Mikage this time with the address and a map so we could locate the right place.

The next morning Peter came and said that he had talked with Seguchi-sensei from the Foreign Students Centre. Lwin-san was dead but there was no information about Khin-san. After a moment of silence, we decided to try to find the place anyway. We did not talk about them during the trip.

The first few kilometres were difficult because the bicycle was too small for me so it was difficult to pedal. There were no pedal brakes, so I had to be careful. We rode through ruined neighbourhoods and took photographs. The traffic was chaotic with cars, motorbikes, pedestrians and bicyclists using the same roads. There were remains of the broken buildings on the roads and in some places the asphalt had been broken into small pieces. Our greatest concern was the glass, for if the tyres were to burst we would have to walk home with the bicycles.

We made a trip to Ashiya where I again tried to find my friend. She was not there, so I left a note with Peter's telephone number. After that we went to Mikage, the area where I had been on Wednesday. From the map I had found that the block was right. But we still could not find the right place because everything had changed so much. There were some people next to a burnt building. They said that their family was OK, but they had lost everything. We showed our friends address and asked if they knew the place. At first they had difficulty recognizing the address as it was written in romaji (English characters), but then they told us that we were in the right area. Peter continued to talk to them and I went to look at a nearby building. I had seen it on Wednesday, but it had looked strange to me. Now I noticed that the first floor had collapsed totally and it was just half a metre high. I found a door lying on the ground. There was a name and address written on it; Khin Thet Swe. We had found the building.

We took some pictures then continued towards mountains. The men close to the burnt house had said that most of the victims from the area had been taken to a hospital located north of Hankyu Mikage station. We wanted to check the situation so we decided to go to the hospital. After a short but steep ride we found the hospital. We went inside and wondered what to do next. There was a list of patients we could check by ourselves. Some names had lines over them and a small note about the moment of death. We did not find Khin's name. Next we checked the list of bodies kept there but there was nobody from Myanmar. One person from the hospital checked some other lists, but he could not help us. There was chaos everywhere, he said. Nobody knew where patients and bodies were so one could be anywhere in Kobe or even in other cities. He took our telephone number anyway. Because there was no time left we gave up on our trip to the university. We stopped shortly at Nikolay's and Slavchok's place, friends from Bulgaria. They were not at home but Peter left a note and a piece of bread for them. We continued towards Sannomiya.

During that day we saw many big military helicopters as the army was now active in transporting people and supplies. Near Oji Koon we saw a big military camp. It was very much like a war. On Thursday I had met Kasamatsu-san and his wife; they were my host family in Takarazuka. They said that everything was like at the end of World War II and they had not expected to see something like it again. At least now I had had a once in a lifetime experience. I just had began to notice that one lifetime can be very short.

At Sannomiya we saw many destroyed buildings. Hankyu-station, the place where Hyogo International Association had been, Kobe Kokusai Kaikan, Sogo, Sannomiya shopping street... Everything was more or less damaged. The drinking area to the north of Hankyu looked bad; several of the buildings had collapsed and broken whisky bottles were lying on the ground everywhere. It would take a long time for everything to recover.

We entered the partly collapsed Sannomiya shopping street. We took some photographs while trying to avoid the glass. Nobody tried to approach us or make us go away. Funnily, synthesised voices were warning us about playing on the escalators, when we were walking inside a building that could collapse during the next strong aftershock. We saw some other people there, many of them were walking around with disposable cameras trying to take some pictures. It was the last chance to take pictures from those places before they would be demolished. The last days of the old Kobe could be something that we can still talk about when we are 50 years older.

After Sannomiya street we went to Nankingmachi (China Town). At the front of it we saw the statue of Snoopy, which was not damaged. Glass from nearby buildings had fallen all around it, so smiling Snoopy in the middle of it was very contradictory sight. We went close and took some pictures in spite of the warning signs. We knew that with the wind and aftershocks, new pieces

of glass could fall so it was better not to stay for too long. In Nankingmachi some small food stalls had began business again and foreign TV crews were reporting about it. We bought some sausages which were a nice variation to our cup-noodle menu. At least life was getting back to normal in some ways.

After a short stay there we had to start our journey back. Several times we had difficulties finding the right way as Japanese streets are very misleading. After this quake they should build better roads and not repeat the errors of old. After the war there was a good chance to build nice cities on the ruins, but the result was urban chaos like Kobe, Osaka and Tokyo. After some mistakes with the roads we finally arrived home but it was already dark. I was very tired at that moment; it was my first time on a bicycle in nearly two years. At least I was able to sleep easily.

On Saturday we visited Peter's host family near Hankyu Kiyoshi Koojin. Their apartment had survived, but the mess was huge. The husband of the family is a professor and he has a large private library. The whole floor was full of books that had fallen and it would take time to put all of them back in order. We wanted to help with the cleaning, but we had promised to go to Sakai that afternoon. So we just talked for a while and had some warm food.

After the meal we took the Hankyu line to Umeda, for the service on the Takarazuka-line had began again. In Umeda we changed to Midosuji-line and went all the way to Kita-Hanada. The whole trip took quite a long time, but it was interesting. We had not washed or shaved for several days and our clothes were dirty. On the other hand, life in Osaka was normal. Other people wore normal clothes, and many young women dressed as if they were going to parties. Life can be very different even when the distance is so short.

In Sakai we met the Noguchi family who were friends of Peter. They had called him and asked him to stay there as they had been very worried. They were members of the Hippo family-club and together with other families, they have a lot of contact with foreign students. They all were wondering how the foreign students would survive as they do not have relatives in Japan and many of them can not speak Japanese very well yet. They had collected cup-noodles for us and gas bottles as they knew that we did not have gas and that making normal food was difficult.

That first evening we had a shower and ate. Some of their friends came, but mainly that evening we just rested. It was the first time that I had met the Noguchi's and their two children. Peter was playing with the kids and I talked a little and watched the news. It felt so strange to be there when the whole world on the opposite side of Osaka Bay had collapsed. I was thinking about Vietnam War trauma; perhaps I understand those kind of things better now.

The next morning we got a message from Mrs. Seguchi. Now it was confirmed that Khin was also dead. We had been prepared for that, but it was depressing news anyway. That day several friends of the Noguchi's came. We ate together and drank beer. In Takarazuka I had limited drinking to one can of beer during meals, as I wanted to be ready in case of a strong aftershock. Sakai I considered safe and so I drank more.

Late in the afternoon it began to rain. That was very bad, as it could cause landslides in areas which had been damaged in the earthquake. Many homes had lost several roof-tiles and now they would leak. In Sakai the wind was strong that evening, like a small storm. I had planned to return to Takarazuka that evening, as I was supposed to have a dinner with the Miyatani's. The weather looked so bad that the Noguchi's recommended that I stay there another night. I did not manage to call Miyatani directly, but through Sakane I was able to tell them that I wouldn't be able to

go there that evening.

There were many adults and children there that evening. Most of them were playing card games and I also took part in some games, but I didn't feel motivated. I was a little nervous and I wanted to visit Mikage again and look more carefully at what had happened. From Mrs. Seguchi we had learnt that the third Myanmarese girl, Aye Thin Thlaung, had survived. She had been studying late at night and so she had slept under her kotatsu (Japanese low heated table). That had saved her when the building collapsed. The other girls had slept in beds so their chances had been much worse. However, we heard that Lwin had lived for some time and had been crying for help but did not have the strength to wait long enough. Later I heard that it had took six hours before Aye-san had been taken out from the ruins. Aye-san's right hand had been crushed and had been damaged. It will be a long time before she can use it again and luckily it seems to be getting better.

On Monday I returned to Takarazuka to meet with the Miyatani family again. I ate lunch there and we talked a little. That day I did not do so much, I finally cleaned the glass away from my kitchen and removed the books and papers from my collapsed bookshelf. I noticed that the shelf was so badly damaged that I had to throw it away. The destruction in the kitchen had also been great and there was not much left of my glass and ceramics collection. I had been planning to ship them home when leaving Japan, so the loss was depressing. Anyway, I was still alive so material losses were not so important at that moment.

On Tuesday I went again to Mikage by bicycle, I was already beginning to learn the quick routes through the maze of streets. I was wearing my leather jacket and mountain boots to protect me from the glass and iron bars. I had decided to enter the building and see if there were any personal things of Khin and Lwin remaining in the ruins. Most of them were probably trapped under the concrete, but I thought something could be just lying around. As they had both died and Aye-san was in hospital, who else could do anything? Perhaps I could send some of their personal belongings to their families and they would be some kind of memories of their daughters.

The building was badly damaged. This time I went to look on the other side also, where the ground beside the building was full of crunched concrete. It seemed that the rescue workers had opened the floor from the second floor apartments and used those holes to check in the destroyed first floor. The whole area was full with books and household items, all of them mixed with pieces of concrete. I found one totally smashed television set which I recognised was Khin's. It had been next to her bed.

I entered the building from the second floor where the wall from the western side had collapsed. I checked the first floor rooms through those holes that had been opened. There was not much space left there and it was not such a good idea to enter the more distant corners of the room as I did not want to be get trapped there alone. I saw Khin's bed and got quite a clear idea what had happened. If she had stayed in it, she had had no chance.

On the ground close to building I saw a corner of a letter. I took an iron bar and began digging. After some time I had found several of Lwin-san's personal letters that had been buried in the ground when they had opened the roof of the first floor rooms. I also found some books and other papers, but there wasn't much. Everything seemed to be buried; perhaps never to be recovered. That was disappointing, as I had wanted to find out some of their photographs and videotapes. Lwin-san's pictures from USA would have been important, but I couldn't see any of them.

That day I left all the objects there and I decided to come again the next day. I wanted to visit the university and check e-mail, where perhaps I could get some more news. I visited my laboratory, but there was nobody inside. All the tables and bookshelves had fallen down and it was a big mess. I collected all my papers and computers disks as I knew that I wouldn't do any more research in Japan. I packed them in my bag and after taking some pictures I left the place. On the third floor I met Hayashi-sensei; he and his family were safe. Their home had lost some roof-tiles, but the damage was minimal. Several pieces of equipment in his laboratory were damaged and it would take several months before they would be able to continue their research.

At the Foreign Students Centre I met Mrs. Seguchi and we had a discussion about what had happened. Five Chinese students had also died, but I did not recognise names. I might have known them by face, but I didn't know their names. Also over thirty Japanese students had perished and many others were in critical condition. Nobody had any idea when university would continue; now many of the facilities were used for the homeless. Several foreign students were preparing to leave the country, to come back sometime in April.

I met Xavier and Minerva there, who were both from Mexico. Xaviers's house had been destroyed, but he was all right. He said that Sofia was also well and that she would come to the centre in half an hour. I decided to wait for her, for I had been worried about her fate. She and many others were now living in Osaka, as life in Kobe was too difficult. Minerva wanted to leave Japan and come back later after she had rested with her family. She and Xavier wanted to make some telephone calls home as there was a free telephone service in the next building. We decided to go there.

That building was some kind of sports centre I think. There were many refugees living there, who were watching the NHK news. I made a call home and talked with my parents. They were just leaving on a trip to Estonia so we didn't have so much time to talk. They promised to inform my Finnish university about my situation. They wanted to know when I was going home and asked me to leave Japan as soon as possible. I promised to go as soon as I could, but it was difficult to organise transport as Kobe harbour had been destroyed.

Soon after that I met Sofia. She looked very stressed and she wanted to leave Japan soon. She did not have any injuries but was not able to continue her research anymore. She was wondering how to write her reports and what she could do. She was very tired and she said she had nightmares and couldn't sleep well. We tried to calm her and asked her to take a rest, as she had always been so busy.

We met also our Hungarian friend Janon's, he had come to visit the university. He had also left the university dormitory at Port Island as there was no water and electricity, and it was difficult to get even food. We heard that only five persons were still staying there. All of my friends seemed to be scattered around Kansai, some of them would leave Japan soon. Life here would be quite lonely now as we could not meet at university anymore.

A lot of things happened after those days, but I do not have the chance to tell much more about those weeks. I will leave Japan soon and have already shipped my things home and my plane will leave next Friday. I have decided to write this whole story in detail after I arrive home, as I do not want to forget it. Those last two months I visited Mikage several times and managed to find some more objects, mainly some things Khin kept on her Bhuddist altar. I visited Aye-san in Kakogawa Hospital and talked with her a bit. She will have a hard time, with no home, and with friends who died. I hope I will be able to meet her again later.

The first weeks after the quake were the easiest ones; then I was so busy doing everything. After that I had more free time, with not so much to do. I could have studied Japanese or done something else, but my motivation was zero. I bought a CD-player and listened to rave music by TRF in the evenings. I drank some shochuu (Japanese alcohol) and beer, often but not too much at a time as I was still worried about aftershocks. Sometimes I listened to music from Myanmar; Khin had lent me a tape just a few days before she died. I decided to keep that tape as a memory.

I had some difficult things to decide as I was offered work in Japan and I didn't have much time to think about it. The job would have been good, but my parents were worried about me and I had a lot of unfinished things to do in Finland. Finally I decided to return home and perhaps return to Japan some day. I think it is better to go home and finish my studies, after that I will think of what to do. I think that after this I am ready to face everything. During these two years in Japan I have seen so much death that nothing can upset me. Coming to Japan was difficult, as my Grandmother was sick. She asked me to go anyway, she said that I have my whole life ahead. Just two months after that she died of cancer, but she had wished me good luck. Soon after that her brother died, so did my old neighbour and another person that I had known. Last summer my grandfather caught a cold and died of pneumonia, and another two months later it was my father's aunt's turn. This didn't stop with Khin and Lwin, and then just two weeks ago I got a letter from a member of the Hyogo World Youth. Sakaguchi-san, an old man who was my good friend had died of cancer. I've started to be used to this kind of news. After the quake I bought a book about Japanese death poems, perhaps I should write one sometimes. I feel as if I am an undertaker; perhaps I have selected the wrong career.

These last days I have met several of my friends and every second evening is full of Sayoonara parties. Some of these people I will meet again some day, others not. I met Aye-san again last Friday, it was the time for memorial service in Kobe University. We were all sitting in the big hall, looking at the pictures of those who did not survive. I met two brothers of Khin-san, as well as Lwin's brother and his wife. They had come from Myanmar for the service. I had sent them letters a few weeks ago, which luckily they got them before coming to Japan. We talked for a while and they asked me to visit them some day in Yangoon. I think I will go there, perhaps not this year but maybe the next. Just before the quake I had promised Khin and Lwin that I would go and visit them some day. Sadly, it will be a visit to the cemetery, but nevertheless I will keep the promise. Life is strange.



Khin



Lwin

After the Ouake

Hong Jing Peng (m)
People's Republic of China
Kobe University

Translated (from Japanese translation) by Steven Costmeyer

I came to Japan two years ago as a full fee-paying foreign student. In my first year I studied Japanese from scratch and in my second, I entered the Science faculty of Kobe University, returning to my studies in the field of Earth Sciences. Last October I began my PhD studies with my topic of research decided on as, "The Strike-slip Fault and Related deposit basin in Eastern Asia ". However, just when I was about to embark on my work on the movements of the strike-slip fault in the Mesozoic era, I met with some actual fault movement in the form of The Great Hanshin Earthquake. My wife (who had arrived in Japan just four days before the quake) and myself were both unharmed, but I certainly experienced for real the severity of natural disasters I had only heard of till then in my university lectures: the terrific trembling of the earth as of falling into Hell's depths; the tremendous roar enough to make one's ears ache; and the enormous amount of dust, with its peculiar odour, rendering respiration a near impossibility.

After the quake, I spent about one week in a daze at a refuge wondering what to do. Each day I received aid from relief workers and volunteers, but as I was feeling quite well myself I felt more and more like I had to *do* something. It was just at that time that I was finally able to get through on the telephone to Professor Miyata, my research supervisor. He explained that there was a distinct possibility that many of the previously-identified active faults had experienced movement in the earthquake. He also informed me that he was about to go and conduct a survey on these movements, asking me, "Will you come too, if you're alright?" "Yes; I'd love to!", was my enthusiastic reply, and from thereonin I was immersed in an investigation for some three months of the active faults that caused the earthquake.

In the first week we went to Rokko-san and then on to the field outcrop site, and measured how much movement of the faults had occurred. After a time, we were able to determine that some faults had moved quite significantly, while others hadn't moved to such a great extent. Going on from this, we proceeded to assess the extent of damage to the extended plain of the Kobe metropolitan area (caused by those faults that shifted), with a survey of the city's damaged areas. Our investigation method at first involved the surveying of the resultant earth-fissures and collapsed buildings. Every day I rode around town in my *sensei's* car, wracking my brains as to what would be the best object of our research in order to find out the approximate distribution of damage within the Kobe metropolitan area.

When I was conducting the survey of the town, many of the utility poles were either fallen down or skewed. Utility poles, unlike buildings, are distributed at uniform intervals over the town like a net. They are also standardised and cylindrical. And since each of the poles received the impact of the tremor together, and were skewed according to the magnitude and direction of the shock received, they must be an excellent indicator of the (non-uniform) distribution of seismic strength. Thus ran my thoughts when I asked my professor if we could conduct a survey of this phenomenon. This was an arduous undertaking involving traversing the entire city via a pre-determined route and measuring each individual utility pole's slant; the sheer number of poles involved making it seem a formidable prospect indeed. Compounding the problem, I had no means of transport; my motorcycle being broken after its premature burial beneath the rubble in the earthquake. And clearly, if I went on foot I couldn't get to the more distant sites. By a stroke of luck, however, I received some two hundred thousand yen of condolence money at that time, and was able to use one hundred and forty thousand of this to buy a new motorbike.

So, in the following one and a half months I measured more than one thousand three hundred poles from the Myouhouji river in the west of Kobe, to the Ashiya river in the east. And as if by magic, upon superimposing this data on a map of the Kobe area, a formerly hidden subterranean active fault became manifest! Following this discovery, using the utility pole data as a basis, we added the data relating to terra-fissures and collapsed buildings we'd collected, and held a joint presentation of our findings at Kobe Municipal University. The results of our research attracted a lot of attention and an article even appeared in the *Kobe Shinbun* the following day. My friends, seeing my name in the paper, were both happy for me and suprised at the same time, and I felt quite proud. One of my friends even asked me "Hong, there must have been something in it for you to have worked that hard!" And when I replied

"No; there wasn't ", he refused to believe me. But I am, I suppose, always benefiting from the generosity of Kobe as a foreign student here and, not forgetting the condolence money I received, it was also a good opportunity of utilising my specialist knowledge: So why not!

Looking back at when I was measuring the angle of all those utility poles of Kobe, I remember how the people would call out to me; those residents knowing that I was a foreign student doing research on the earthquake encouraging me with a warm, "*Ganboroya*" (Hang in there!). Thanks to them I was able to experience a real feeling of satisfaction and of doing something worthwhile. My professor and I are due to make another presentation of our findings shortly, this time in Tokyo, so I guess I have to continue to hang in there!

Soon after the earthquake

Huang Hua (m) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

The year of the dog according to the Chinese lunar calendar was a dangerous year for me. It proved to be so; I had two accidents, and also met with a great earthquake, the likes of which hadn't occurred in a period of six hundred years. This proves that the year of the dog was indeed dangerous for me.

During the New Year vacation I went to the USA and returned on the 13th, in time to 'experience' the Great Hanshin Earthquake. It occurred while I was still suffering from jet-lag related problems.

The morning of the earthquake I was thinking about my schedule for the day, when all of a sudden the shaking began and I was bounced up and down five or six times. This was then followed by a severe horizontal shaking. The lights went off. I realized that an earthquake had struck. I wanted to escape but the tremors were so severe that I could not move. After the shaking stopped I put on some clothes and rushed outside.

I was living in a dormitory run by a private company which accommodated nine overseas students. When I went outside, I found all the other residents there. They were busy telling each other about their individual experiences, but were worried about the threat of tidal waves. We had survived the earthquake, but didn't think it would be possible to live through a tidal wave.

Somebody switched on the radio in a car and we all gathered around to listen to the news. There was apparently no danger of tidal waves and so we relaxed. From the surrounding areas flames were rising high, and there was a lot of smoke. We were worried about the fires and gas explosions which could prove to be just as terrible as the earthquake.

We all went to see the conditions of the buildings in the area and found that most of the Japanese-style two-storeyed houses were reduced to single-storeys. From a house on the corner of the road we heard someone's cry for help. A few of us went back to rescue the person. The man was trapped under a pillar and had broken his upper arm. In order to rescue him we had to lift the pillar. The aftershocks refused to cease, and gas had started leaking in several places. No one knew when the building could crumble, or when a fire would break out. After an hour's hard work at the hospital was dreadful. Many people had severe injuries and blood was seen all around. As more and more injured people were being rushed in, the hospital was soon overflowing. Many of the injured were supplied with oxygen masks to assist respiration. Many had lost their lives. Only then did we realize the gravity of the disaster.

All these things happened within two or three hours after the earthquake. Despite the short time span, this was the most terrible experience of my life.



名前

Experiences of the Great Hanshin Earthquake

Huang Zong Nan (m) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

More than two months have passed since the Great Hahshin Earthquake. However, the leaning buildings, collapsed structures and the broadcasting of the refuge centres on television make me recall the events on the day of the earthquake.

On the 17th January at 5:46am there was an earthquake in Kobe with a magnitude of 7 on the Richter Scale. I was living on the second floor of an apartment block in Nada Ward and was awakened by the strong, violent vibrations of the quake. The vibrations were extremely powerful and I felt as if everything was sinking. Once the shaking calmed down, I looked out the window to see if it was a dream or reality. At that moment, everything started shaking sideways. I could hear the sound of utensils falling but was unable to move as I was holding onto the bed firmly in order to prevent myself from falling off. It was painful and dreadful. My wife responded to the situation quickly and shouted at me to cover my head with my futon. I did as I was told and let my body sway with the shaking. I found out later that the earthquake lasted a mere twenty seconds, but it felt as if it continued for several minutes. When the quake stopped I got out of bed and tried in vain to switch on the light, but the electricity supply was cut off. The room was full of dust. Realising the danger of being in the house, I told my wife that we should leave. We started towards the door crushing utensils and other things lying on the ground. We made our way to the door but it wouldn't open. As there was no other way out, we smashed the door with our legs and eventually managed to open it. When we looked outside, to our surprise there was no staircase and the ground looked very close to our floor. It was unbelievable. As it was dark and I was not wearing my glasses, I asked my wife to confirm what I thought I had seen. It was true. We stepped out and were on the ground. We were totally shocked and rushed to the nearby park.

After reaching the park I looked up at the sky and noticed two flashes of lightening. I was frightened and couldn't utter a single word. By this time many people had reached the park. I was very worried about the landlord and his family living on the first floor of our building, so I went back and called out their names, but there was no reply. I saw that the first floor had sunken into the ground. For a moment I thought they could not have survived, but nevertheless I still kept on calling to them. Fortunately there was a car parked in front of the apartment and since the building fell on it, a small opening was created through which the landlord's family was rescued. We shook hands to celebrate their 'rebirth'. Later I went with the landlord's son to rescue other people who were trapped in other buildings.

With the sunrise we could see that the neighbouring apartments had collapsed and smoke was coming out of those that were on fire. In some extremely unfortunate scenes we saw people with serious injuries, and even bodies of those who had died on the spot That particular moment changed the fortunes of many. It was hard to believe it was real. We were buried in grief - my wife was in tears. "Thank God we are alive", I said to her. Neither of us had ever encountered such a disaster in our lives. We were left homeless, and experienced the pain of having close friends taken from us as a result of the earthquake. We will always remember this day.

Finally I would like to express our deepest condolences for those whose lives were sacrificed. I

would also like to thank everyone who helped with the tidying up afterwards. I conclude this article with a prayer for the quick restoration of Kobe.

Looking for shelter for foreign students

Masashi Inoue (M) JAPAN
Kobe Design University
(Translated by Welody Ivonne Tan)

There is a tutor programme for foreign students at the Kobe Design University. I was a tutor to a foreign student for two years in this programme. I realized that foreign students face many problems not only with the language but also with the culture throughout their stay in Japan.

The earthquake made me worried about some of the foreign students with whom contact could not be made. In order to be of assistance, on the 19th of January, I went to one of the shelters in Nagata district to search for the missing students. It turned out that they had fled to Osaka and that they were unhurt. I also found that at the shelter there were many foreign names on the list of people taking refuge there.

I believe that Japan should encourage more international exchange and that it should be more open, to make it easier for foreigners to live here.

Reflections-After the Earthquake

Jean Joichi (f) USA
Kobe University

As a research student from the University of Washington-Kobe University Exchange Program, I have had many experiences throughout this past year and a half in Japan.

My most treasured memories are of the many friendships that have been established; from my Japanese teachers and Japanese zemi-mates to the foreign friends from countries such as the Philippines, Turkey, Brazil, China, Korea, Bulgaria, New Zealand, etc. Despite having a different social culture and customs, I discovered that we are all PEOPLE who experience the same emotions of happiness, sorrow, love, hate, achievement and frustration. Also, these differences make me only understand my own culture better.

As for the most unforgettable experience, it is of course the GREAT HANSHIN EARTHQUAKE. Though recognized as an international city before the disaster, Kobe became more so of an international city as people cooperated together. For instance, in my neighborhood, a fire had erupted around 9:30 AM. With no firetruck in site, neighbors scurriedly formed a bucket relay. Japanese, Filipino, American, German, each standing side by side, passed pails of water to each other. In areas such as Nagata-ku, Korean and Japanese were cooking, eating, and living together. A flood of support was also offered from many countries as the disaster had touched their hearts as well.

Kobe will continue to be an international city with friends and encouragement from around the world. From this earthquake experience, new friendships and relationships have also been established. As we make new friends from across the lands and over the seas and have a chance to understand a little more about other PEOPLE, it is my hope that this will lead to further cooperation and peace within the world.

This song is dedicated to friends around the world and to those who were affected by the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake.

FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD - by Jean Joichi

KAIBIGAN, AMIGOS, CHINGU, PRIYATELI,
ARKADAS, BAN, PONGYOU, TOMODACHI,
Though the words all sound so different
They all mean the same
In this world of joy and pain
We can become FRIENDS

*Friends around the world
Let's all take a stand
Together in peace
As we join hands

Though we come from different lands
So very far away

Where customs and language
Vary in many ways

People are people
Wherever one may go
With a mind and a heart
Where emotions and love flow

Friends are something special
I hope that you'll agree
Together as friends
Let's sing in harmony

*repeat

Friends around the world
Forever we shall be
Together as friends
You and me.

Fear

-

Kang Ilsung (m) KOREA
Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary
(Translated by Kirsty McCann)

I am from Korea. It has been three years since I came to Japan. I lived in Kobe's Higashi Nada Ward, Mikage. At the time of the earthquake, I was in bed asleep with my wife and daughter. All of a sudden, we were shaken up and down, and then to the side. As the vibrations continued, I became scared that the building would fall over. There was not just one tremor, but many - and they were powerful. I don't even know how long they lasted. I lay there, full of fear as I experienced the earthquake.

I took my wife and daughter outside. I became more scared as I detected a smell of gas in the air and I thought it might explode. We ran towards the car park. But, even if we were to escape in a car, where could we go? I then decided to go to the church where I work, taking the road along which I always travel. But the road was no longer there. It had disappeared under the rubble of fallen buildings. I looked around me, and once again experienced a great fear. My whole body was terrified.

Our Faces

Kim Eun Hee (f) KOREA
Osaka Communication Art College
(Translated by Kazuyuki Kiryu)

It will soon be three months since the earthquake occurred, but even so we are all still recovering from this terrible experience. Looking at the situation around us now though I find a wonderful sense of enthusiasm, and discover many people striving to overcome the difficulties that we are facing.

I somehow find the sound of construction machines at work comforting.

The earthquake claimed a great number of lives and cast Kobe, a city I love, into misery. However, all things considered, we can say that we have been given both a chance to look back and reflect on our present life, and also a lot of problems left to solve - this in exchange for a number of dead people.

After the earthquake, I sheltered in an elementary school near my house. I will never be able to forget the old man who, a stranger to me, said, "I lost my house. I have no money. I have no family. I might as well be dead as in a situation like this." Why do we think that to be dead is happier than to be alive? The old man's words sounded to me so very sad, as they were desperate words from the mouth of the old man. I think this story shows us that current problems in the society where we live are serious. Why are we afraid of getting involved with matters that have nothing to do with us? And why do we reject people even when they speak to us? Do we know who lives next door and how they lead their life? I'm going to ask myself a lot of questions and reflect deeply on all of this.

In place of the collapsed houses and cracked roads, I believe that new and better buildings will appear. However, I wonder when we will be able to recover our human feelings and love in our hearts.

Spring in Kobe

Young-Bok Kim (M) KOREA
Kobe University
(Translated by Seam Ellwood)

JANUARY 16, 7PM.

I was in the research laboratory using the computer and watching TV. The news on NHK had some information on an earthquake. It was a level 2 on the Japanese scale and was centered in the area of Awaji Island. Since moving to Kobe, I'd heard many times that there were never any earthquakes, so I wasn't particularly worried. That evening at around 11pm I returned home, and received a call from one of my kohai (junior). He was having some problems with his exchange programme. He was hoping for some helpful advice from me, but unfortunately I couldn't think of anything helpful to say.

Two hours later I was reading a letter from my girlfriend. I finally went to bed at around 2:30am, but I should have been asleep and dreaming well before then. I awoke to a shaking that rocked my entire body. Instinctively I threw back the futon, stood up and switched on the light. The entire room started shaking. I was unable to stand up unsupported so I had to grab on to a post by the closet. The light I had switched on was flickering on and off, and the fridge was flying about the room. The bookcase at the end of the room fell on top of the futon in which I had just been dreaming.

After all electricity had been cut and the room was cast into darkness, I awoke from the hellish dream. Grabbing a torch, I searched for a pair of trousers. Everywhere the beam of the torch fell was an indescribable mess. Hardly anything was left standing, and scarcely being able to move a foot in any direction, I finally found some clothes, and decided that I just wanted to leave the room.

I went step by step to the front door. Then, from outside a man's voice called, "Is everyone O.K." Hearing that voice I calmed down a little, and felt that my sense of direction had come back to me.

"I'm alright!" I said, trying to open the door, but it wouldn't open.

"This 'aint good" I thought, and used all my strength to kick and push the door open. Finally it opened.

I was feeling a sense of relief at being able to escape, when someone from an apartment nearby yelled out that their child was trapped beneath the debris; the child's cries and the smell of gas made the scene look hellish. As if coming around from having passed out, I looked round and saw an old man from next door dragging a fallen object towards the door and making every effort to open it. He broke the glass pane in the door and placed the object next to it so the people inside could get out. Although not as strong as the first shock, minor tremors were still continuing. Deciding it would be safer away from the still standing buildings, I went to a tennis court a short distance from my house.

Many people had left their homes. In the darkness I could only see shapes and I didn't know what time it was. There was a cold wind blowing which chilled me to the bone. Then I started worrying

about one of my sempai (senior) who lived in the neighbourhood. "I hope he's alright". The entrance to the apartment block where he was living was blocked by a fallen wall and was in a dangerous state. "I hope he's alright". Back at the tennis court there were still no broadcasts with information on the earthquake, and there was a sense of uneasiness blowing in the cold wind.

I realised that I was standing, not thinking, and letting time pass. Faces of people next to me I hadn't been able to see before became visible. There weren't many people like me wearing trousers and socks. Most were covered with futons, were barefoot, or had a combination of shoes and slippers on. Then I saw my sempai in the group of people. I was more relieved than happy at seeing him.

As it grew lighter the appalling sight of the buildings around us began to become clearer. The sight of something so bad, something I had never seen before, and so close to me filled me with fear and left me speechless.

"What shall we do now?" I asked my sempai. There was no reply. Snow started falling. No, it wasn't snow. It was ash. There must be a fire somewhere. In the distance there was black smoke rising; we were surrounded by it. Added to the smell of gas I hardly had the courage to go back to my room; but I took courage from the actions of the old man next door; and taking longer than I thought it would, made it to the front door of my building.

With holes in the roof and cracks all through the building, I lost hope when I looked at the indescribable scene. Deciding firstly to clean my room, I went in and found all my important possessions. After a while, a friend living in Kita-ku came in his car. We hugged and were glad that each of us was safe. The three of us got together, and then we started worrying about one of our kohai (junior) who was living south of the Hankyu railway line. We drove the car on roads which were still passable. On the way we saw collapsed buildings, roads raised up at weird angles, collapsed railway lines... We tried to find our kohai in Rokko-michi - an area where hardly anything was left standing. Her apartment had completely collapsed; there was nothing left to see of it.

We decided to go for the meantime to my friends place in Kita ward, and when it grew dark we looked around for our kohai again. We wandered around in the dark and went to every hospital in the area we could remember. We checked the registers of the dead and injured and gave up after going to a hospital next to the Higashi-nada Ward Office. However the next day we found her when she left the shelter she had been staying to return to her apartment.

After about eight of us had spent three days as evacuees, on the third day some went back to China, but I was worried about my lodgings so I went back to the university. The university buildings were alright but the inside of my laboratory was like my room in my lodgings. And it was not just that; Kiso, the student I had shared the laboratory with, had died in the earthquake. Apparently the building in which he lived had collapsed, trapping him beneath the debris. I just didn't know how to react to this news.

After that, with feelings of unease, the days of living on just bread and onigiri (Japanese rice balls) began. The blaring of sirens 24 hours a day did not help to relieve the anxiety.

Cleaning up the laboratory took four days before it was restored to some extent to its original state. After spending days with no purpose, and feeling insecure, I found a chance to leave Kobe on the tenth day. A friend of mine was in Nagoya on business and wanted me to go and see him. I put some clothes in a bag and dragged my exhausted body to JR Ashiya Station. As far as the

eye could see, everywhere homes and buildings had been destroyed. How many people had lost their lives?

Even after travelling for a while in the train, the scene before me hadn't changed much. I just sat there silently and let the awful scenery roll past. In the space of about 20 minutes the scenery had changed completely. As we approached Osaka Station, people were walking about with peaceful expressions as if nothing had happened. For a moment I was angry, and wanted to hit these people with their smiling, complacent faces. Maybe this was because I hadn't seen anyone who seemed worried by the situation in Kobe.

I found a window seat on a Nagoya bound shinkansen (bullet train). Maybe it was because of the earthquake, but there were few passengers so I could sit where I liked. While the train was moving an image of devastated Kobe overlayed itself on the scenery outside. Destruction, fire, Kiso's death. My eyes started going in and out of focus. Tears started flowing; I didn't feel embarrassed.

Meeting old friends, I have not been able to talk about my experiences, and usually finish by only saying that I escaped without injury.

It's now spring. The cherry blossoms are in full bloom and are enticing us from our homes. I received a letter of thanks from one of the old ladies in the neighbourhood. I've been receiving thanks like that ever since the earthquake, but I can't remember what I did to deserve them. Maybe it's all the result of the earthquake. Homes which last night had bright lights on, have now been snuffed out by fires.

Spring has already come, but I wonder when spring will arrive in the hearts of those who lost their homes and are still living as evacuees. Because of everyone's efforts to respond with wisdom, my heart does not beat so much now when I hear sirens coming from the desolated night. However, my heart continues to ache as each day passes for the death of my friend Kiso who can now only be seen in photographs.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest sympathies for all those who have lost loved ones and pray for the fast recovery of Kobe.

Kobelike a Phoenix (Post-earthquake diary)

Marcia Kono (F) Brazil
Kobe University
(Translated by Marcia Kono)

Some months have passed since the earthquake in Hanshin area, but it is still hard to believe it really happened. Many people have recovered themselves and begun to rebuild their lives. But some remain apathetic, lost inside themselves. To me, being a witness of such silent suffering is even worse than to look around and see the destruction of the city I began to love...

I always felt myself 'at home' in Kansai, especially Kobe, for the people are open-minded, expansive. Within a year Kobe captivated me. Now, when I look around and still see signs of all the destruction and pain, my heart cries, it aches. But I am sure that one day Kobe and all the people that passed through such distress will recover, like a Phoenix...

The earthquake, to me, was like a divider of time, as if my life in Japan can be divided between before and after the earthquake.

In order to bring what I have been feeling out into the open, I wrote a mini diary. I wish you to read it...

Before the earthquake - Memories

Before the earthquake, between April 1994 and January 1995, I was able to study and enjoy myself. I studied a lot of Japanese and some business administration, in order to pass the entrance examination for the master's course I would face in March. As for enjoying myself, I travelled a lot in Japan, made new friends, went bowling and to Karaoke, and gave special attention to my boyfriend (who is now my fiancé).

That was my 'world'. Like any student, life was simple, and happy. I lived one day after another, making the best of every second. Living intensely every minute, every second of my life was my concept of happiness.

Before the earthquake, I had only three big worries: look for an apartment, pass the entrance exam and go back to Brazil once.

January came, bringing a new year. I promised myself I would work harder and go one more step to achieve my dream (which is to become a professor): enter the Master course.

At the beginning of the month I joined an excursion organized by the Ryugakusei Centre (International Students Centre) of Kobe University to Shiga-koen, Nagano Prefecture. It was five days of skiing, and enjoying myself a lot.

When I came back, the first thing I did was to search for a good apartment. I found one in Higashinada-ku, near Hanshin Mikage Station, on January 15th. After that, I needed only to concentrate on the entrance exam and my travel to Brazil...

Earthquake and After - Changing...

Early in the morning of Jan. 17th, I was still awake, studying. I was nearly asleep in bed when a slight shaking occurred. It felt like a heavy truck passing on the street. But, suddenly, everything began to sway... I sat in my bed and I could only feel the trembling, hear things falling and people crying... It was then that I realized it was an earthquake. I could not believe I was experiencing it. My fear grew, and the only thing I could think of was that I could not die, not in such a stupid way, and so far away from the ones that I loved. Feeling like this gave me the strength to think as to what I should do.

As soon as the shaking calmed down, I decided to leave my room - out of darkness. In the corridor, I met the other girls that lived on the same floor. As soon as we heard the alarm, I told them to get out of the building, for the alarm could mean fire or a gas leak... I waited, closing some doors and helping one of the girls to get out of her room. As soon as we got out of the building, my fear was gone, and I was even able to laugh at someone's jokes...

The whole day we watched the news, and when there were after-shocks, all of us got out of the building quickly. Me too, until I got used to them. I could not believe the number of injured and dead... Where was the army, the Government - help? How could it be that the media got there earlier? During that day, a strong feeling of revolt and anguish substituted my initial fear. But, somehow, I would keep myself calm.

I was lucky enough to be able to call my family and my boyfriend minutes after the earthquake. My grandma cried a lot, for she had faced the Great Kanto Earthquake many years ago, and she had never imagined that I would go through the same experience in Kansai. But the fact that I kept myself calm helped me to relieve my dearest ones..

I stayed three days in Port Island, where I used to live. Those were really sad days. People were worried, there was no water, no gas, no food... The only way to get off the island was to walk to Sannomiya. In front of the understocked supermarkets, queues of a thousand people or more stood waiting. In the news, there was too much speculation. Many said that Rokko Island and Port Island were going to sink... I did not believe it though.

On Jan. 19th, I escaped Port Island on a ship with a destination of Kansai Airport. With me were Mami, Sueli, Minerva, and some friends from Thailand and Australia. Mami, Sueli, Minerva and I went to my boyfriend's place in Shiga Prefecture. It was so good to meet him after all...

I stayed one and a half months in Shiga. At the beginning tears would come to my eyes as I watched TV, filled with such pain and suffering. I felt myself impotent, anguished.

I began then to work as an 'Information Center' between the Ryugasei Center and some foreign students. But it was not enough... I then offered myself as a volunteer, first calling some groups and entities. However there was almost no answer...

By that time I decided to call the Brazilian Embassy to tell them we were OK and to ask if any help was needed. One lady took the call, and as soon as I told her I was from Kobe, she asked me rudely what my problem was. I told her there was none, that I had called to say that we were OK. This lady then had the courage to tell me that, if I was OK, then I need not have called... but as I had done so, could I tell her how many Brazilians were in Kobe, and how to contact them. This lack of respect and information shocked me. How could a person who is supposed to help behave in such a way? I hope that any others who might have called received better treatment. Afterwards, I was informed that some Brazilians received assistance. But nevertheless the image that remains in my mind is the one experience I had...

As simply calling and offering myself as a volunteer was not enough, I went by myself to some places, such as Takarazuka, Nishinomiya, Ashiya, Nagata, Higashinada-ku, Rokko... and entered some volunteer groups directly.

I began as an interpreter, especially to Latin and Asian people, giving information, through the telephone. But little by little, people began calling me not to get information, but to talk, to get the suffering and anguish out of their hearts... many even without having met me personally... On the occasions when I took food to the shelters, I would sit close to someone that seemed sad or depressed, and begin talking. That is how I met Mrs. Maeda.

She was 71 years old, and alone. When we began talking, she told me she wanted to die. Her husband and only son had died in the earthquake. Her house was completely destroyed. "What reason do I have to stay alive?", she asked me. I did not know what to say so I took her hand in mine and cried with her, in silence. After that, I told her that she had not died because God did not want it, because somehow her mission here was not finished. That she had to make an effort, recover and, with her experience, knowledge and kindness, who knew if she could not help others? She smiled, but said nothing.

I met with her for three days. On the second day, when she asked my name and heard "Marcia", she was surprised. When she discovered I was Brazilian, she said that I had a 'big' heart, as I helped them in spite of being a foreigner. I told her that the important thing was that we were all human beings and people should help each other, regardless. She cried, and embraced me, becoming Grandma Maeda.

On the third and last day, I found her better, talking to another lady, repeating exactly what I had told her...

I know she moved elsewhere, but I do not know where to. Anyway, I am sure she is OK.

The entrance examination which had been one of my main worries, was 'forgotten'. I studied only when I had time. Even though I was permitted to enter the Master course, much of this I owe to my advisor, to the Ryugakusei Center's staff, and to the love and support I received from my family, my fiance and friends... Thank you!

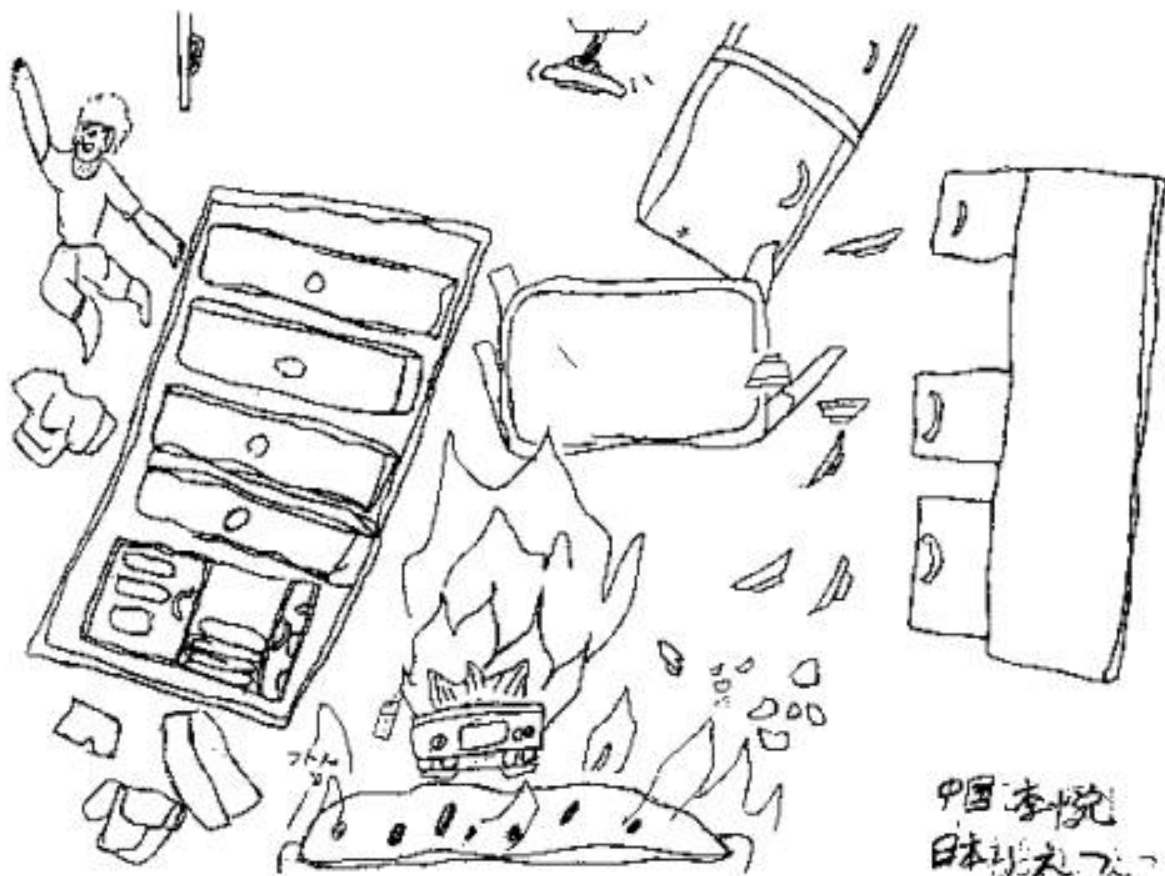
My concept of happiness has also changed. To live intensely every second, but to do so not only to my self-realization, but also to help those that I love to be happier.

Kobe! I love you...がんばって !

My message:

What I want to see
is not you crying, your despair, the pain...
what I want to see
is you recovering...
To have you close,
you who survived, who aroused
Do not keep looking back
past is gone, and there is so much to happen...
It will not be easy

but we can do it, together
like a Phoenix, reborn from the ashes...
stand up, take off the dust
and give me your hand...



Quake in Kobe

Peter Kretzmann (m) GERMANY
Kobe University
(Translated by Peter Kretzmann)

It happened on Tuesday, the 17th of January, at quarter to six in the morning. Monday had been a national holiday so the last train was earlier than on working days, and those who therefore missed the last train had to walk the last kilometers home and were sleepy. I did it that way. It was quite a good time for an earthquake: supermarkets and streets were empty, but it got bright outside soon.

Those who never experienced a strong earthquake by themselves can hardly imagine the feeling of it. The whole house is shaken with unbelievable power, the noise of dancing and falling furniture is loud, and all you can think is: The house is going to collapse. After twenty seconds it is over and you are left in total darkness and silence with no electricity. Looking for a flashlight is difficult, but successful. Wow, the apartment looks amazing! Even the window sill which had been filled with origami cranes is now totally empty. The refrigerator, which had been placed in one corner of the kitchen is now right in its center so you can walk around it. There is broken glass everywhere.

Surprisingly, the phone works and I get a line to Germany immediately. My parents had been sleeping and are totally surprised. "There was an earthquake, a severe one, but I'm OK".

Then Mika (my friend from Finland living next door) and a Japanese neighbor knock at the door: "Everything OK?". Outside it is dark and cold. I look for some clothes and go outside. At first sight, the houses in the neighborhood do not look so bad; a garden wall has collapsed and squashed a bicycle. But all people agree, they never have experienced a quake like this. Slowly dawn is breaking and one can hear the first sirens.

A walk through the neighborhood shows more collapsed walls and vending machines, then one can also see damaged and destroyed buildings. The railway line is bent by a small landslide - no way to go to the university for some time. At some places water comes out of the ground and the smell of gas is everywhere. But it does not look like a disaster.

After three hours electricity comes back, and on Mika's TV which has survived the fall to the ground we see the first pictures of Kobe city. It is a disaster! Many areas are burning or razed to the ground, railway lines and highway bridges have collapsed. Also the phone does not work any more. What about all our friends who live closer to the university?

A longer walk shows that just two kilometers from my own apartment the situation is very bad. The *Shinkansen* track has collapsed. Quarters with old buildings in traditional Japanese style are completely deserted. The heavy tiled roofs just have squashed the houses below. Most roads are blocked by a mixture of tiles, furniture and wooden walls, in which the owners dig for their personal belongings. A sad scene. No one here has insurance for earthquakes because it is expensive and it was thought that there are no severe quakes in Kansai area.

New buildings, mostly rather ugly-looking purpose-oriented ones like the building I live in stood the shocks in many cases without damage. But in some cases the walls of the first floor collapsed and the second floor fell down, becoming the new first floor. In these cases there was no chance for the people in the first floor to survive.

I do not sleep well the first night after the quake. There are many aftershocks, and I worry about the people I know in Kobe city. I decide to go to Kobe with Mika by bicycle the following day.

On the way from Takarazuka to Kobe we pass hundreds of destroyed buildings, some of them burnt down. Streets which are open to the traffic are totally crowded; the traffic lights do not work due to lack of electricity, creating chaotic situations around intersections. All three railway lines have collapsed 'in some sections; taking them down and reconstructing them will take months. In sections where the railway tracks are undamaged, people carrying bags and backpacks are walking along the tracks, heading for Osaka. The air is filled with helicopters and everywhere you can hear the sirens of fire-engines and ambulances. It exactly matches the idea I have of war.

Some supermarkets are open, but either nearly all goods are already sold out or people are waiting for hundreds of meters in front of the entrance. Queues of the same length are at places where water is available. Also at public phones there is no queue shorter than ten meters. All along the streets there are garbage heaps of incredible size. At some places, people are sitting in front of campfires, warming themselves or preparing meals.

We find out that most of our friends survived with no more than a fright, except two girls from Myanmar; we do not even managed to find the house they have been living in. The whole area is destroyed and the streets can not be recognized. Later we will hear that both of them died.

The following days bring some relaxation. The aftershocks get fewer and fewer, on TV the nonstop-news is replaced again by the usual game shows, the phone system works and in place of the destroyed railways bus connections are established, which are of course totally crowded. A trip to Sannomiya turns out to be a mistake: On the way back, the queue at the bus stop has a length of 400 meters, which means waiting for several hours. We prefer to walk for an hour and stay with friends for the night.

Life is unsatisfactory after the quake. Mika and me do not have any serious problems, but there is nothing for us to do but watch the news on TV. We are too far from Kobe for voluntary work. On the other hand we see how the Japanese people take care of the foreigners struck by the quake. We receive several invitations for lunch and to take a bath, we receive food and drinking water. After stating that the biggest problem is the cut gas supply, we are given a gas cooker and thirty spare container of gas - this is sufficient for months! Two more times we go to Kobe by bicycle to look for some personal belongings of the two girls from Myanmar, a sad expedition. Finally I follow the invitation of an acquainted family in Osaka to go there for two weeks of "home-stay", leaving Takarazuka.

Mika and I, we had good luck during the quake. Lots of people have had many many more problems. I want to express my sympathy to all the people who lost family members or possessions.

Earthquake-The Day Kobe Died

Hannah Lee (f) NEW ZEALAND
Kobe University

Tuesday 17 January 1995
Higashi-nada-ku
Kobe
Japan
5:46am

I can't remember the shaking. I can remember realising that we were in the middle of an earthquake, but I must have blocked the shaking from my mind. I was fast asleep in bed. My first instinct (I think) was to pull my duvet up over my head to protect me from the objects that I could hear falling all around us. Something had fallen on top of me. Luckily it was only the Japanese paper doors that my bed was next to. I can also remember thinking that before long it had finished. I had expected earthquakes to be longer.

It was pitch black, and dead silent. No one knew what to do, we were all in shock. One of the Japanese living upstairs jolted us into reality by calling down to see if we were OK. That sent us into motion, and we called out to each other and confirmed that we were all OK and without injury. We had no way of realising how bad the situation was: we all knew it had been a big one, but being unable to see in the darkness, we hadn't realised the precarious situation of our house, or how lucky we were.

I called out to Jun (Brazil) to try and get out through the front door, as he was closest. He tried, but yelled back that it wouldn't budge. One of the Japanese living upstairs produced a torch, and started flashing it around upstairs. To my surprise, the beams were reaching my room, and I saw Jun standing in the toilet trying to escape from that door. The wall between my room and the toilet had disappeared as too had the toilet. Presumably the wall had crushed the toilet into the ground. Kirsty (Australia) at this stage pointed to what used to be one of the walls in her room: that too was gone. It didn't occur to me at that time that Kirsty's and my rooms were now one. The doors separating us had fallen on me, and all around. The feeling of panic started to arise. Little by little we were beginning to realise the full affects and the damage.

At that stage a strong aftershock hit. Kirsty dived across the doors and other fallen carnage, and we sheltered together in my bed under the doors - not that they were really about to protect us if the house fell further. It was still dark and we didn't know what to do fearing more aftershocks, and not knowing how to escape from the house. A strong torch was shining in Kirsty's glass doors, and a woman's voice yelled out asking if we were OK. Kitsty, panicking slightly yelled out that we weren't. I think I told her to shut up, then shouted back replying that we were all alive and without injury. The woman and some men tried to help us, breaking the glass in the door. Following the light I made my way across the room and was pulled to safety. I was in my pyjamas, and was barefooted. All around was glass so I stepped on my rescuer's boot as he pulled me out through the

door. Kitsty followed, as did Jun when he had made it through the kitchen and into Kirsty's room. The two Japanese and Zac (Australia) had a tougher job getting down from upstairs. The staircase was almost vertical, with stairs missing. They eventually made it down, crossed the kitchen and escaped through the genkan (entrance hall) where the doors had disappeared. Our rescuers reappeared, miraculously producing several pairs of shoes which we accepted with gratitude. Putting them on we looked around us for the first time.

Our house was on a very definite lean, right into the neighbours house causing a huge hole. Our two storied house was now a very uncertain one-and-a-half stories, about to collapse into a one storied house. The garden wall had collapsed leaving a pile of rubble where my clothes had been hanging to dry. It was this that disturbed me the most. As it was still semi-dark it was hard to ascertain a lot of the damage, but this was something I could see - possessions of mine that I could see had been buried. I started searching through the rubble, and soon came up with a pair of jeans (earthquake-torn) and a couple of my tops. Everyone was looking at me strangely.

Although all my attention was on our house, I was aware of ravage all around me. Surveying the damage around me, I became conscious that some of our neighbours were in a lot worse condition than we were. The house just metres across the street had totally collapsed leaving only a large pile of rubble. Later two were to be pulled from the debris alive, but the Grandmother and Grandfather were not to be so lucky. What had been the sake factory to our left was also debris. I remember being awake at 4:30 in the morning once and watching workers working. I presume they were working that morning too.

There was not much left of Mikage Honmachi where we lived. We stood out on the road outside our house in semi-darkness shocked by what we were seeing, and pointing out to each other places that we knew, which were now in ruins. At some point in the confusion, Kirsty was sure that our owner had come to see how the house was. As it was dark and I was without my glasses, I talked to her about it, not realising until days later that it was not her, but instead a neighbour. The neighbour in fact with the noisy yappy dog who we had often talked about how nice it would be if it met with an unfortunate accident. Unfortunately it survived (I thought animals were supposed to warn of earthquakes?) but even the earthquake could not stop it yelping.

I can remember Kirsty wondering why the rescue workers hadn't come yet to get the Grandmother and Grandfather out of the house. Little were we to know that it would be over a week before their bodies were recovered. The rescue emergency services were not prepared for such a disaster - nobody thought that an earthquake would hit the Kansai area; earthquakes were only supposed to happen in Tokyo - or so everyone thought. The only people we ever saw rescuing people were neighbours and by-passers. After several days the Self-Defence Force started to move in - too little too late for a lot of people.

We stood beside the road for a while before I realised that I was getting cold; it was winter, and all I had was my pyjamas and a pair of borrowed shoes. The Japanese upstairs had escaped from the house, only to enter again and to come back again with a few possessions. If they can, why not me? So I entered cautiously into the genkan, feeling the tatami sway under my feet, grabbed my coat just inside the door and ran.

Jun and I eager to see a bit more of the area, crossed under the expressway (which was on a definite angle, and closer to the ground than we had remembered) to more damage. The other side of the road was worse than our area. A row of about six houses in a row were totally collapsed, with neighbours and people I recognised from school helping to pull bodies from the debris. Jun and I not knowing what best to do approached the area, just as a little girl of no more than ten was pulled from the rubble. The limp body was passed to her mother. Another woman was asking people to search in a section of a collapsed house where her uncle had been sleeping. No trace was found of him - she was praying that he had gone for a walk before the earthquake happened. We stood there not knowing what we were doing, and feeling more of a nuisance than a help, so we back-tracked the twenty metres of so to the end of the street, where an old man came running up to us, begging us for help. He led Jun and I to the remains of his house where he pointed to a space no more than ten centimetres high and pleaded to us to get his wife out who was trapped underneath. He had been calling out to her but had got no reply. He had come up with the idea of using a fallen beam to levy up the second story of his house to get his wife out. Needless to say it was impossible. Jun and I feeling defeated returned to the others outside our house.

About fifteen minutes must have passed since the earthquake. We hadn't until that time considered the possibility of a tsunami, and as we were near to the sea, we decided to walk uphill towards the station - with a bit of luck one of the public phones could be working.

One of the first things I can remember thinking after it all, was hoping that we had coped the worst of it. I can even remember considering that it had been the Tokyo earthquake that everyone had been expecting, and that we had got the tail end. Past the coffee shop on the way to the station, a couple who had already started picking through their rubble, or fixing their house had a transistor radio out, so we stopped and listened anxious for any news. The radio announcer was saying that the centre of the earthquake had been at Awaji Island, not far off the coast of Kobe and that the earthquake had measured 7.2 on the Richter Scale in Kobe, and that Osaka and Kyoto were hardly damaged. I felt relieved at the news, however at that time, no one knew how extensive the damage really was, or how many people had suffered. Kirsty at one stage after we had left the house had said that there must be so many people dead from it; maybe even FIFTY!! It took a couple of days to realise that the death toll was over 5000.

We walked the eight minute walk to the station in almost dead silence, taking in the surroundings. I could not see much without my glasses, but could see enough to perceive that there were buildings where whole middle floors were collapsed; that there were cracks all along the road with whole sections at different heights from the rest; that the rest of our area was in as bad if not worse shape than we were; that the Kobe we knew was no longer. It was then that I first felt the shock of it all, and started crying.

The station area was not as damaged as we had expected, and to our surprise, one of the public phones was working I got on first, not really sure what to do as mum and dad would have been at work. It was about 6.20am in Japan - 10.20am at home. I rang direct to the New Zealand operator, sobbing the whole time, and asking her for the phone

number of Nelson Polytechnic, blubbering that I had to get hold of my father and please make him pay the charges. The operator was very nice and helpful (not that I really took much notice at the time) and finally dad was on the other end of the phone. I can't remember exactly what it was I said, but something along the lines of: we had a big earthquake, and our house collapsed on top of us, there are people dead all around us, and I've got to go because there are a lot of people wanting to use the phone. Poor dad! Everyone had there turn ringing up home. An old man came running up at one stage wanting to call an ambulance to come and save his wife's life. He couldn't get through to the emergency services. We called John (Australia) when we were able to get to the phone again. He said everyone up his way was fine and that they were having little drinkies. Poor wee Chris' pot plant fell over and broke two leaves!! Oh the sorrow of it! When I asked if he could get a few people around to come down to our house to help get our gear out he asked why. There had been little damage up on the hill by University, and so he found it hard to believe me when I explained that houses were collapsed everywhere with people dying.

One thing I noticed while waiting to use the phone at the station was that everybody seemed very calm. We were the only ones I could see displaying any emotion. I talked about it with Shunei afterwards, and he said that Japanese people believe that crying in such times is no good to anyone - if you're crying you can't be helping out. It made sense to me, and also shows the differences in cultures. Westerners are more concerned for their own person, whereas Japanese are brought up to put the group first. I read in some foreign newspapers later some of the reporters calling the Japanese cold and uncaring after the earthquake. I felt that way at first, but our neighbours and ordinary Japanese of the streets were particularly kind and helpful to us afterwards. Neighbours that had never spoken before now had something in common and were helping each other, and chatting. It was a wonderful atmosphere, and it brought everyone together.

We walked back to the house slowly in the morning light. Zac had somehow retrieved his camera, and was snapping photos. We arrived back and stood outside not knowing quite what to do. The first thing we thought was to start getting our furniture out. And so (quite stupidly in hindsight) we made a few trips into the house bringing out our possessions and placing them on the road. It was all quite a joke. We had survived the earthquake. The kitchen chairs came out then Jun was hungry so went inside and brought us some bread. Kirsty got changed out of her pyjamas in her room (I was also inside getting my passport and stuff) when a big aftershock came. Kirsty ran outside, taking a whole section of the door with her. I just stood in my room in shock. It was then that we realised how vulnerable our house was and how stupid it was to keep going back in. I had by that time filled up a bag with a few clothes and study, and had the chance to see how bad my room was. Looking around the whole house, we could see little things that were supporting our house; my wardrobe, a couple of fusuma doors, my suitcase... It was a very dangerous situation.

Sometime during that morning, Jun saw a bleeding flaccid body being dragged from a house a couple of doors away. Jun, captivated, went over to have a look and came back shaken and crying. I could also see the body, but to blind me, everything was a blur. The body was put outside the neighbours house on a futon. Zac was later recruited to help carry it onto the back of a ute to take it to hospital. The body at the stage was alive, just.

When we had all our junk on the road outside our house, a little car pulled up and asked if we could clear the road so they could drive through. The car stopped a few metres from our house, and the mother and daughter supported the father as he limped towards the car, presumably to be driven to hospital. I had by that time found my glasses, and I will never forget the blood stained cloth tied around his ankle, of the agony the father appeared to be in. I'm very thankful we never got to know our neighbours. It would have made it so much harder.

As we stood outside our house, different people kept turning up to see if we were OK. One of Jun's friends who lives close, Fujita, turned up first, and seeing we were OK ran to see if other friends were OK. Ario (Indonesia) and Marcio (Brazil) turned up not much later. That had both been near our area when it happened. Kouchan turned up and stayed with us for awhile. Then all the sempai; Jeremy, John, Chris, Jason etc. Everyone had been most worried about us. John was shocked when he first turned up, reporting that Rokkomichi was absolutely flattened and that we were not too bad off compared to up the road a kilometre or so. He had come across a section of collapsed railway lines that had fallen onto a taxi. All he could see were the taxi driver's limp legs poking out the door, with blood all around.

John kept telling us how lucky we were. I was disagreeing with him, saying how unlucky we were to be caught in the earthquake. But now, after seeing my bedroom a few times since, I am beginning to realise how lucky we were. I have heard a lot of people since talking about fate, and about how the earthquake has made them think of life in a new way. I wouldn't go that far, but I realise that the position of my bed and the sway and the length of the quake saved my life. My desk was covered with a concrete wall. If the earthquake had swayed any other way, our house would have collapsed burying Kirsty, Jun and me. Especially since the room above mine is a storage room, filled up to the roof with heavy chests etc I don't think I could have survived. It's hard to imagine that we all alive without so much as a scratch or scrape.

As well as feeling lucky for my life, I also feel kind of thankful in a way not for all the deaths of the damage, but because I have always thought that my life has been too good, too lucky. I can't remember too many times when I have been unhappy in my life, and certainly not for long periods of time. I have always felt that my luck will have to run out sometime, and I have been waiting for some sort of disaster. I now feel relieved in a way, maybe I've run out of my luck, or maybe this is all the bad luck I'm going to get. Mind you, I came out without a scratch - maybe it is a continuation of good luck. I'm getting confused now!

We sat outside our house for a while on that Tuesday, talking and wondering about the consequences, especially in our own lives. Where were we going to live, what had happened school, what was going to happen to exams...?? We had some furniture, chairs we were sitting on. But what were we going to do with them. We realised after a while that it was useless taking things from the house. Even if we could without injuring ourselves, we had no where to store it all. We put everything except for a small bag each, back inside the house, and prayed nothing would happen to our house until we could get back again. Through out the day we had felt several aftershocks, and anyone of them

could have meant the end of our house.

We decided to try and go to the Port Island Dormitory to see if they would give us a room. Kitsty and Zac set out on Kirsty's bike with Jeremy following behind with luggage. Jun, John and I waited and waited. We took the time to discover more damage, and just to talk. Kirsty and Zac eventually came back after several hours and had only bad news. All the way in to Sannomiya was total destruction, some areas a lot worse off than us. Roads were stuffed to the brim with cars and vehicles trying to escape, and all the roads were in bad condition, some of them totally unpassable. Kouchan had reported to us early that on the way from his house to see us, he passed a portion of the Hanshin Expressway that had collapsed onto its side, causing a huge wall. The highly publicised section was only a few miles (if that) from where we were. They finally made it into Sannomiya to cross over to the man-made Port Island. The bridge was barely crossable, and only to pedestrians and bikes - whole chunks of the bridge were missing. Making it over, what they found was total chaos. The whole island was covered in centimetres of mud which had come up through the soil and concrete. After driving around in it for a while in the mud, they realised that even if the dorm was still standing, it probably wouldn't be in a very livable state, so they came back. What to do now? Jun decided to go to Rafael's (Mexico) place, Zac to Chris', Kitsty and Jeremy to Jason's, and me to John's. So we set off in our different directions (or maybe we got lifts up with Kirsty?). All the places to the north in the hills were undamaged. Jeremy had originally thought his place was OK - the only damage he reported was spilt soya sauce on the carpet! But returning later on in the day, he noticed a definite lean to the building, and the owner was telling everyone they had to leave.

Up at John's place, we had electricity and even water. Unfortunately the gas was out so we couldn't have a shower, but the lady next door was kind enough to cook us all up a meal. During the evening John had many friends around and everyone was trying to confirm their friends safety. I rang up my host family, and mum and dad again. They were all frantic and concerned. The Kashikis wanted me to get on the next train to Gifu. I had to explain that no trains were working, and the only way we knew to escape Kobe was by walking to Osaka. I had been trying to get hold of Shunei all day, but wasn't particularly worried because I thought he was safe in his dorm in Osaka. When I finally got through to his dormitory, one of his friends told me that he hadn't come home from his home in Akashi where he had been visiting his parents. That got me very worried as Akashi is a lot closer to the earthquake centre at Awaji than we were. I left a message with the friend for Shunei to call me back at John's and later on that night he did. Thank god. They had been untouched there but were very worried for me.

We spent a lot of the evening watching TV and seeing the damage. We saw the expressway, the train tracks, the roads, the buildings, but worst was the fires in Nagata-ku that started that night burning millions of hectares. The TV experts had a reason for the extensive damage. The earthquake was only a couple of hundred metres below the surface, as well as an up and down action (as opposed to the normal side to side sway). This was the reason why tall buildings lost their middle floors - it went up and then sideways, so the tall buildings were still on their way up when the bottom floors went sideways.

I got a call that evening from the Nelson Evening Mail wanting an interview - the first of many! I became a media star at home; in the local and main papers (front cover); on the six o'clock news on TV; and even on the radio!

John had been talking to a friend in America who told him that American TV was reporting that seismologists were predicting (20% chance, later upgraded to 30%) another big earthquake of 6 or more on the Richter Scale for Kobe. That got us very scared and I had the worse night of my life. We kept a light on all night, but the night couldn't have gone slower. Neither John nor I got any sleep. I kept thinking that if another one come, I would die for certain this time. My luck had run out. After-shocks were happening on a regular basis, and the worse thing was that we could hear them coming, like a big truck going past in the distance. I was sleeping on a futon beside John's bed. Every time an after-shock would come he would put his arm down as if to protect my head. I threw my head under the covers, and rolled as far as I could towards John's bed, theorising that if the roof fell down (on John?) I would be saved because it would break off at the end of his bed, covering and saving me. Each time I would think, is this going to be the end, is this the end? It wasn't, and the expected big one didn't come, and we were all exhausted the next morning after the longest night of my life.

We didn't know what to do in the morning. So we watched TV for a while. To our horror they were reporting a huge gas leak less than a hundred metres from our house. They were expecting the whole area to go up, and evacuated thousands of residents around the area. Luckily for us the leak was fixed, and our house was safe for the meanwhile.

We were never short of food. Early that morning John and a Japanese friend left to line up outside a supermarket they heard was going to open, and came back with a big bag full of goodies from cup noodles to bottled water. Apart from that we had food that John had already had, and food from friends in his apartment block that were trying to escape to Osaka that day. We felt fairly safe where we were (John's place is only two years old) but when the water was cut off at about midday, I didn't think I could stay there much longer, and besides, I was scared. John and I had thought earlier on to full up his bath with water, and we had already started boiling water and bottling it when the water turned off. But, without gas or being able to use the toilet, it was not a good situation, and I wanted to leave to the safe haven of Osaka. Kirsty, Zac Jun and I consulted, but by that time it was already two o'clock, and it starts getting dark at about five at that time of year, so we decided (very reluctantly on my behalf) to put it off until the morning. We had been told that trains from Nishinomya were running, so we decided to head that way - we thought about a four hour walk. However, as I was outside the apartment trying to look for a private place to drop my pants (private places in Japan?!), who should go past on his scooter but Kouchan. I yelled out to him, and he stopped. Him and his friends were trying to walk out that night for Nishinomiya, so he lent me his scooter. What luck.

That night the lady next door again made us a meal. Jun staying with John and I, and later on Ai rang up to see if I was OK. She and some of my other friends had been trying desperately to get hold of us. She had even sent around a friend to look for us at our house, but he didn't know which one our house was, and just reported back that all the houses in our area were totally demolished. She had somehow rang up looking for Shunei

at his dorm (how did she find the number?) to be told to ring him at his house, where he passed on John's number. She had been staying at Takako's house in Ashiya, another bad area, that night. After the earthquake, they got what they could carry, and left, bound for Kyoto. They walked for several hours, then stole a couple of push bikes, then caught a taxi when they got to civilisation. Takako's place was also destroyed.

Too exhausted to even care if an aftershock came, I went straight to sleep, waking at morning to more interviews. We set off at about ten, firstly going via school to see the situation there. The school building were unscathed (unfortunately) so we went to the Foreign Students Office. They welcomed us with open arms - we were the first of five hundred and fifty foreign students to walk through the door to report ourselves safe. They were even more relieved when we were able to give them another ten or so names of people we knew were safe and well. However, in reply to our enquires of accommodation and exams, they could tell us nothing. They were more concerned with finding the whereabouts of the other five hundred and forty foreign students. We were all told to contact our embassies which we did, but they too were of little help.

At school there were a lot of people wandering about. It was a shelter for some of the 300 000 who had lost their homes. By chance we came across Sakurai, a friend of Zacs who had come that day from Osaka to help friends. As we were travelling by bikes (Jun and me on Kouchan's scooter, and Kitsty and Zac on Kirsty's bike) he told us the route that was open when he came through in the morning. We set off. I was not expecting to get far on the old run-down scooter with the two of us on it, but it surprised us all. The roads were in terrible condition, and traffic was bumper to bumper. Cars that day were taking thirteen hours to cover a distance that normally takes three-quarters of an hour. We passed by more ruin and horror than I have ever seen or expected. Riding flat out on the scooter for two hours, along footpaths, side streets, through red lights, we still couldn't escape the destruction everywhere. It was only past Nishinomiya, closer to Osaka that the damage appeared to be lightening off somewhat. But all around there were still plenty of houses with blue helmets on as I called them - blue plastic sheets protecting houses whose tiles had fallen off.

With Jun helmetless, and us breaking all traffic laws between us, three hours later we finally made it to Minoh, Osaka where my host family were expecting us. We felt bad about them putting all of us up, so we stopped by at Osaka University of Foreign Studies first where we saw old teachers, and reported us all safe, and demanded a room in the hostel. In typical Japanese bureaucracy, they said they could not give us a room - even though there were plenty free. But they did provide us with coffee and biscuits while they rang around looking for a place for us. They found one - unfortunately, it was the Kansai Dormitory. Kirsty and I had lived there for six months previously and hated it. But it was a bed and bedding, and free!! We had showers at Gaidai, then went to my host family's. They had been waiting for hours and Okaasan had eventually gone out looking for us. We had one of the best meals I had had in a long time, and we were provided with a nice comfortable futon for the night. And we slept and slept.

I stayed there the next night too, relaxing, and trying to forget. On Monday Shunei arrived back from Akashi, five hours on the train. He had to take a route north through the mountains. It was so good to see him, and it was only when I started talking to Shunei

that I began to feel really depressed and cried. A couple of days later, I went round to Shunei's dorm, and cried and cried non-stop for three hours. The affects of it all were beginning to be felt.

All the time we were watching TV anxious for more news. The railways were all down (as we knew) expecting to take three to four months to get back in action. The Hanshin Expressway is expected to take at least three years. Eighty percent of the buildings in Sannomiya can not be up and running for business within the next three months. Ninety percent of buildings will have to be rebuilt. The damage is estimated in the trillions of yen. We also found out from the TV (earthquake news was on all channels, 24 hours per day) why the Expressway had collapsed. It was rushed twenty odd years ago to be finished in time for Expo in Osaka, and wood was found inside some of the pillars - the workmen had forgotten to take them out, thus weakening the structure. Earthquake building standards in Japan are reputed to be the toughest in the world. Twenty five years ago a new standard was introduced requiring concrete reinforcement at every ten centimetre interval. *Most* of the buildings built under the new code held up well, but a lot didn't. The port of Kobe (the sixth biggest in the world) should also have been built under strict earthquake standards, however the unlikelihood of an earthquake in Kobe meant the construction standards weren't nearly as strict as they are in Tokyo and Yokohama. The Port of Kobe is expected to take two years to become operable again.

As well as the damage, there was the criticism, both domestically and from abroad about the way the Government treated the disaster. The Government was not quick to respond, nor did they respond in a way that was helpful. It took days for help to come, and the Government turned away many offers of help from other countries.

One day not long after, (that Sunday?) Kirsty and I went around to my host family's in the morning. My host sister told me they were expecting rain in Kobe that afternoon. We got really freaked, figuring that rain would weaken our house probably causing it to collapse, so we set off bound for Kobe in a hurry. Kitsty and Zac were on Kirsty's bike, I was on Kouchan's scooter, and Jeremy and Jason accompanied us on their scooters. We had a lot of fun getting there, once again ignoring all traffic rules, and we made it in about two hours. It was scary going inside the house again, and after only about three trips in, I couldn't make myself go in again, I felt like I was pushing my luck. We all knew that at any moment the house could go down. We all wore helmets, but we kept bumping into things, making the whole house creak and move. I managed to get what I thought at the time were important things - photos, as much clothes as I could, and sentimental things. Fortunately a lot of my things were on a shelf (which hadn't collapsed) where my stereo was, so things were relatively easy to grab. I managed to grab my stereo and Zac got his computer, so we were pretty happy. We hadn't managed to get hold of Jun before we left, so I grabbed a few of his clothes and pictures and put them in his pack.

It was nearly dark when we got our few grabable possessions out of the house and onto the road. We thought to take them up to John's place and store them there for a while, so we piled up a few of the scooters for the first of our many trips. It was hell making the normal ten minute journey up to John's. Traffic was still immobile, and the roads were in a disastrous condition. About an hour later Ario and I arrived at John's, and begged the Obasan next door to let us into John's apartment with her key. We stopped by for petrol

on the way back (the petrol stations were operating on hand pumps) and when we arrived back at the house, piled up for another trip. We got most of our stuff up to John's by about the fifth trip, storing it out on the veranda. It was about 10 o'clock by that stage, and the Obasan bought us all in some nice hot curry. We ate up quickly, and set off for another adrenalin rushed journey back to Osaka. I was exhausted.

We all were anxious to do something, anything, but we couldn't decide on anything until we knew what was happening at school. Our chance came a week later when on Tuesday January 31, there was to be an explanation meeting at school. The owner of our house rang us on Sunday night saying that she was applying to get the house bulldozed the next day so if we wanted anything, please get it out quickly. Again we decided to return to the house, this time with a truck. We all had a lot of things we wanted to get - I had forgotten the pearl necklace I got when Grandma died. So Zac and I went to Gaidai to book us a Van. To beat the traffic and save us from a ten hour drive, we set off at 3:30am on Tuesday morning, loaded with food and Jeremy and Jason and their scooters. Surprisingly it only took us a couple of hours, so we arrived at the house in plenty of time - while it was still dark. Zac parked the car in our small road, and we all tried to sleep, but we (I don't think it was only me!) were scared that if another earthquake came, we would be too close to falling buildings - and besides, in ten more minutes it would be exactly two weeks since the earthquake. We shifted out onto the big road, but none of us could sleep.

When the sun came up just before seven, we all set off into the house, "for the last time". My belongings meant more to me than any stupid earthquake that could come along, so I swept aside my fear, and got as much stuff as I could. I came out feeling very satisfied at the end with most of my clothes (I couldn't get any skirts or dresses though - my wardrobe was now part of the wall), my kotatsu, my heated carpet which I only bought two days before the quake, futons, pillows, Grandma's pearls, and a lot of my books. I am glad I'm an organised person, I had a lot of things stored in bags, and I knew exactly where everything was so I just had to grab things and run. One interesting thing I noticed in the my room was a picture I had hanging on my wall. The wall had fallen onto my desk, but the picture was still face up! It says something about the sway of the quake. By about ten o'clock we had all we could get out, but no furniture or big things. We piled up the van to the roof, and decided to store it all in Shaun's (New Zealand) room at the Port Island Dormitory. It took us several hours to finally get there, but we piled his room high with our belongings. Shaun had left Japan for Australia a few days after the quake, not intending to return.

We made it to school at 2:30, late for the meetings. The rooms were filled with people, some of my friends travelling four or five hours to get there. They told us what we pretty much expected. Exams were cancelled, and instead we were to have reports - but under a page per subject. What a joke! Seven people in the Law Department had died - no one I knew - and thirty nine school wide. It was good to catch up with my friends again.

After we had piled the van again with what we wanted to take back to Osaka, we went to the Foreign Students Office again. To date, seven foreign students had died. I knew only one of them, Jay. I had met her only once and had really liked her, but Kirsty was good friends with her. She was Chinese and a year ahead of us, in the Business Administration Faculty. She had been living in a building where several foreign students died, the second

floor where she was living disappeared. It took several days to recover her body, and John and Ario went to her funeral. I kept thinking of her poor parents - they had been spending their life savings on putting her through University in Japan. Apart from Jay, no one I knew had been killed. We had never met our neighbours, thank god! It took a while to catch up with all my friends though. It took about a week before everyone I knew was accounted for in some way or another.

The Foreign Students Office took good care of us, giving us food and drink, and telling us where we could get money. The government was giving 100,000 yen to each person who lost their home, as were Monbusho to foreign students. There were various donations, from both organisations and from friends, and in the end I made quite a lot of money - enough for me to start rebuilding my life, and to replace what I had lost.

I decided to head off the next morning to Gifu to visit my host family where I could be pampered and looked after, and where I could get down to my reports. Zac and I set out for Kobe again first in the morning to try and receive some money we had been promised, and to look for a new place to live. However with the trains down and buses operating instead, we spent hours in queues before I gave up and left. I had a brief meeting with Ai in Kyoto to get some notes, and made it to Gifu around four o'clock. As expected, I was loved and pampered in my week there. Okaasan even had their Church Father pray over me, because she thought I may have been emotionally and mentally stressed. It was when the Father was asking me questions that I realised how stressed I actually was. I realised that before I go to bed every night, or when I'm not doing anything, my thoughts automatically go back to the events of the earthquake. When I enter a room, I inspect the layout of the room, figuring where I'd take cover and what would fall on me if an earthquake came. Even now, five weeks later, trains turning corners, trucks going past in the distance, even a thunderstorm the other night, all make me freeze, and scared. A lot of my day is just spent thinking.

Since leaving Kobe, and especially in Gifu, I've had to put up with everyone asking the same questions over and over again. What was it like? Were you scared? Did anyone you know die? At first I didn't mind so much answering, but now after seven weeks of it, I'm truly sick of it. I just want it all to go away - I don't want to talk about it or remember it all again when anyone brings up a question.

I had to leave Gifu on March 9 to go and get my ticket home from Air New Zealand. Ansett Australia had offered all Australians affected by the earthquake in a return ticket home for 50,000 yen, about a quarter of the original price. I rang up Air New Zealand to ask if they were doing something similar - they offered me a ticket for 100,000 yen, but it was better than a kick in the face, so I accepted. I was to leave Japan on February 16 for a six week holiday at home.

Back from Gifu, I tried to finish reports, as well as seeing as much of Shunei as I could. Still the TV was working overtime on news of the earthquake, and the front page of all the newspapers were devoted to earthquake news. It was all getting a bit much, although I was still anxious to get as much information as I could. Now the TVs and newspapers were dealing with the "people" news - the hundreds of thousands still living in shelters, and the stresses, how the children were coping... I remember one particular story in the

newspaper one day: at one of the shelters udon (Japanese soup with all sorts of vegetables etc) was being served for dinner one day. A Japanese woman requested only the soup (ie without the vegetables) but the man serving said he would have to ask his boss. That boss decided to ask someone else further up the line. The answer finally came back negative, sorry that's not allowed. All over some soup. I think it's a perfect example of the Japanese bureaucracy - everything has to be done through the proper channels, with no leniency, even in face of a disaster.

Shunei invited me to his family's house before I went back home. I had some things I had to sort out at University, and I wanted to collect some textbooks and things from John's and Shaun's places, and I wanted to see our house again. So Shunei borrowed a friend's motorbike, and we set off on February 14. It took a long time to get there, but on the back of the motorbike, Without having to concentrate on driving myself, for the first time I was able to look around fully. It was my forth (?) trip back since the quake, but cleaning up hadn't really started between Nishinomiya and the University. At University, I told them of my plans for going home, and I also applied for the University Dormitory. Results come out on March 20, it would be good if I made it in, then I could look around for a proper place slowly and still be close to school. But not fancying my chances (50 females out of a university of 15,000) I also had a look in a book of homestays. There was one offered in Nishi-Akashi by Shunei's place for two females. So I rang up and arranged to go and have a look later that afternoon. It is a nice new place that looks like it would give us a bit of privacy, so I have tentatively arranged for Kirsty and I to live there until we find other living arrangements.

Shunei and I then set off to look at the ruins of our house, fully expecting it to be bulldozed down by that stage. To our surprise it was still standing, although the bulldozer was at the neighbour's house at that stage. It was Shunei's first trip into Kobe since the earthquake, and he said what I have since heard a lot of people say: it's much worse seeing for yourself than what you see on the TV and in the newspapers. Shunei was shocked by the condition of our house (it *is* a lot worse than you can see in the photos) and found it hard to believe that we all got out without being injured.

We were there in a good time of day with light streaming in the broken doors, so I decided to take a few photos, and see if there was anything else I could salvage. Shunei was scared going inside, but helped me pry open my wardrobe door so I could get the remainder of my clothes, and a few little bits. I felt that I had rescued all I could from my room, so I was feeling very relieved.

We went via the Port Island Dormitory to get my bankbook and textbooks from Shaun's room. Through Sannomiya was very slow moving, so I managed to take a few photos from the back of the bike. The clean-up process was well underway with a lot of the big buildings being pulled down. A lot of the buildings were boarded up with white sheets, so it was hard to tell what was going on behind them. Port Island was how we had left it last time. People were still living without water or gas, but everywhere was a very friendly atmosphere. We went through to the other side of Kobe, onto Akashi where Shunei's parents live. Three hours that day on the bike, and we still hadn't passed the damage. It was a long ride, but an eye opener for both of us.

We were looked after well at Shunei's, and it was good to see them again. Fortunately their area wasn't hit too hard. We left midday the next day for the three hour ride back again to Osaka. I couldn't get over the destruction everywhere.

Two days later I left Osaka and the memories, and headed home. I have been home now for three weeks, and although the horror is slowly dying, there hasn't been a day gone by when I haven't thought of the earthquake in one way or another. For the first week of so back I was still terrified of being caught in another earthquake, or some kind of natural disaster, and even had to jump into bed with mum and dad in the middle of the night once because I was so scared. However, I am now feeling very recovered, and am ready in a way to go back and face it all. I have been stopped by many people, asking me how I am, and what it was like. I've learnt to smile and say not much. I'm sick of it all, and want my life to go back to normal. I want a place to live again, and I want my life back.

Everyone has been so supportive and helpful through it all, especially mum and dad, and my two host families. It is at times like this that you realise how many people do love and care for you, and want to help.

I don't know what lies in store for me now. I'm going back to Japan on March 30. I don't know where I will be going, or where I'm going to live, but I know I want to get back, and continue on at University. As I've told a few people since I've been back, it takes more than an earthquake to get me to quit. I know I've got a tough year or so ahead, with not much chance of permanent accommodation for a year or so, but I'm willing to wait. I miss my friends and Shunei and want to talk it over with some of them - in a way, they're the only ones who can understand my feelings and know how to help me. Writing this has helped to get rid of all the frustration and terror inside I think. Hopefully in time, I will no longer survey every room I walk into looking for a place to hide when an earthquake comes. I know how lucky we are to have survived, but I'm ready to go back and rebuild my life in Kobe again. It was an experience I am never going to forget, and a great story to tell my grandchildren in years to come!



On the way back

Lin Qing (f) CHINA
Kyoto University of Education
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

I had finally become used to the commute back and forth between Kyoto and Kobe once a week. Hankyu Railways is one of the most important modes of transportation which I use frequently. It takes about two hours from Kyoto to Kobe, and I often used this time to read or listen to music on my walkman.

On the evening of January 16, as usual, I started my journey back to Kyoto. At Osaka Umeda station I changed lines for Kawaramachi (Kyoto). On the train I managed to find a seat, however that day I was not the mood to read or to do anything else. I just sat and looked out of the window. The sky was full of twinkling stars. Unconsciously, I happened to glance at a train bound for Kobe passing by. For a moment I felt depressed. I did not know as to why I felt so; I had a feeling of being deprived of something. Tears formed in my eyes and as I looked at that train I felt that I would not be able to go back to Kobe again.

By the time I reached my dormitory it was 9:00pm. After preparing for the next day's class I visited my neighbour, Shunmei-san and then went back to bed.

The next day in the early morning, I was awoken by a terrible shaking. Shunmei and I immediately realised that it was an earthquake and so after it had finished we tried to confirm that everyone was safe. We learnt from the news on the radio that the situation in Kobe was terrible and so we were worried. I went to Kawaramachi station at noon but the train service was suspended. I waited in the Takashimaya Department Store for the train service to resume its schedule. At 4:00pm the Hankyu line resumed service to Umeda, however arriving at Umeda station I was informed that it was impossible to travel to Kobe. The next day in Kyoto, all trains were running normally and Hankyu was running through as far as Nishinomiya-Kitaguchi. All forms of transport from there on in were in disarray due to the earthquake. Many people flocked to Kobe. Houses on either side of the railway tracks were destroyed and the rails were uplifted in many places. The people on the streets had not even cleaned their faces as they were busy rummaging for their belongings in the rubble from their destroyed houses. One could read on their faces that they were tense and worried.

On reaching Nishinomiya-Kitaguchi, I started walking towards Kobe. On reaching Ashiya I found a supermarket open. I noticed that people were calmly waiting in queue to buy essential commodities. I was moved to see that even in a crisis situation, people were observing public morals. In Higashi-Nada Ward, the sirens of the ambulances and fire engines were ringing constantly. Most of the buildings had collapsed and huge cracks were running through the ground. After four hours of walking, I finally reached Sannomiya, the heart of Kobe. Sannomiya, which had always been a lively place, was very different that day. Right in front of me was what used to be a tall, grand building that had been crushed by the earthquake. Many of the popular shops had also been destroyed. The Kokusai Koryu Kalkan (International Exchange House) which I had often visited had also been destroyed.

I felt that the time had come to depart from Kobe. The unbelievable had become reality. I do

not want to say sayonara to Kobe but I feel that I have no other choice. It is only now that I understand my feelings when I was on the train the day before the earthquake. Perhaps it was a premonition. I have to part with Kobe but it is not I who is to blame - it is the fault of the earthquake.

The encounter with a foreign student

Kasumi Maeda (f) JAPAN
Kobe University
(Translated by Kasumi Maeda)

I experienced the quake that occurred on the 17th of January while at my house in Kakogawa. Kakogawa is situated between Akashi and Himeji and did not suffer much damage. However, I spent some days feeling uneasy because the transportation facilities had come to a complete stand still, making it inconvenient for me to move around.

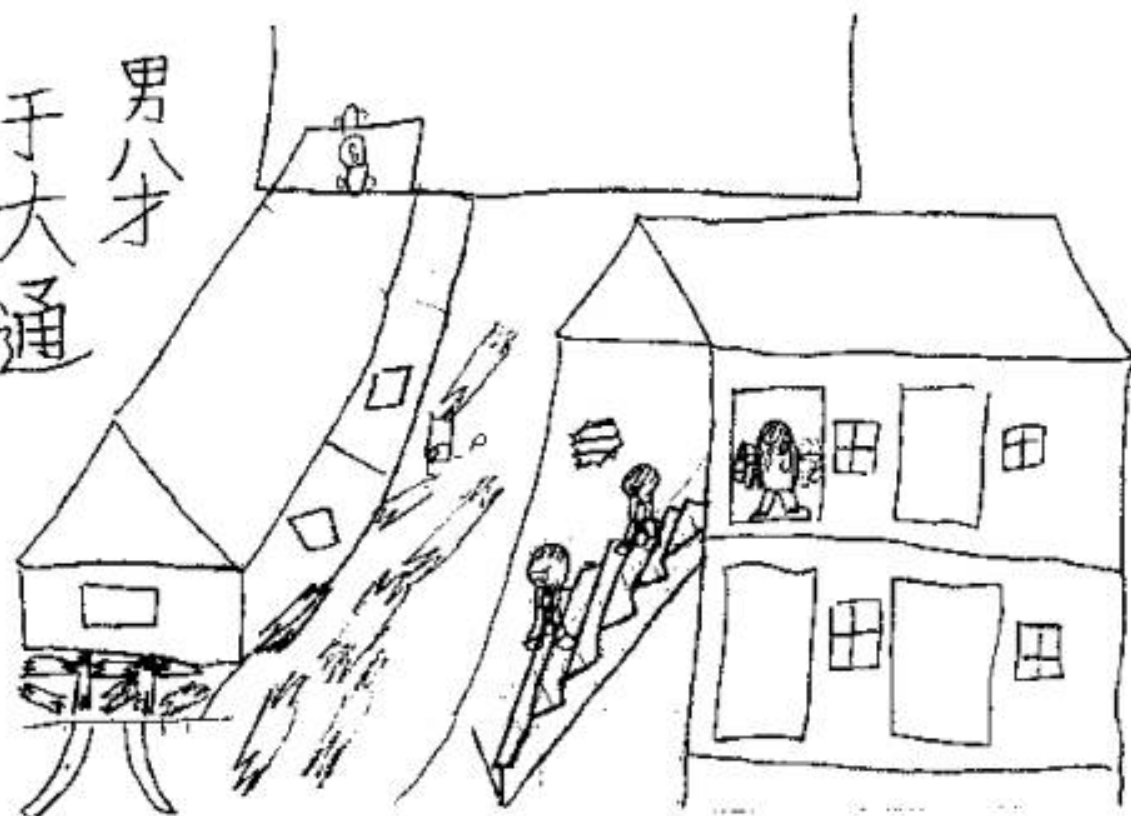
One day I got a phone call from Mrs. Seguchi, the adviser of our university volunteer club 'Truss', and I heard from her that a foreign student from Kobe university who was seriously injured in the quake had been sent to a hospital in Kakogawa. Since I did not know her I was worried if a visit by a complete stranger would upset her, because she had been seriously injured and was experiencing shock as her apartment had collapsed and some of her friends had passed away. However I decided to visit her because I thought that it might make her feel better just knowing that there was a student from the same university living near the hospital, and that I was willing to help.

To be honest, I had expected her to be feeling very lonely and inconvenient at being sent to Kakogawa - a strange city which is distant from Kobe. However it seemed that she had many close acquaintances who were kind enough to come all the way to the hospital to see her and she had all the necessary items needed for hospitalization. Therefore I felt relieved at first because she did not seem as depressed as I had imagined her to be after such a terrible experience. I also felt that she soon became used to me, so I visited her frequently. However, before long I noticed that what had actually happened to her was too heavy and she had suffered mental shock. While visiting her, we talked about many things and I found out that her uneasiness and affliction were very serious. She was very worried about her friends who had passed away and their families, her study, her injury, and her life she had to carry on after the quake. I wished that things for her would change for the better.

She would often say "Thank-you" to me but I think it is I who has to thank her. After the earthquake I was in a state of anxiety as I felt I was not able to do anything constructive. She that gave me a purpose to act for and helped me overcome. Being with her I met many people and learned many things from the conversations I had with her on various topics. She said that when she had been helped out of the broken apartment, she had felt as if she were a newly-born baby, having nothing in this world. This expression made a very big impression on me. Having met under such extra-ordinary conditions has made us intimate, as though we were real sisters.

I cannot define what this earthquake means, but as a result I had a wonderful experience having met a terrific person like her. I thank her a lot and hope our friendship will last forever.

男才
于大通



A Glimpse of Death

Kirsty McCann (f) AUSTRALIA
Kobe University

I was awakened by the sensation similar to that of a solitary truck, rumbling past in the early hours of the morning. Dismissing any curiosities which may have presented themselves, I can only remember experiencing two distinct feelings in those first brief, moments. First was the extreme cold, unaware of the blanket I had wrapped tightly around my body in an attempt to sieze all traces of warmth. I also must have been aware of the time; the definatè memory of realisation that university started in three hours, that I would have to be up in two and a half remains in my mind.

Suddenly, a crescendo of vibrations that seemed to emanate from the bowels of the earth shook the foundations of our house; at first gently, becoming increasingly vigorous and uncontrolled. A wave of fear overcame me, accompanied by the instinct to protect myself - so with the futon pulled up around my head I lay in the foetal position, alert now to the fact that I was experiencing an earthquake. It seemed like minutes that I remained there, motionless, adjusting to this hard reality from which peaceful slumber seemed so distant, aware of the house collapsing around me and praying that nothing would fall from above. It was not until a few days later, after the chaos had finally begun to dissapate, that I learned the Great Hanshin Earthquake had only lasted a mere 22 seconds.

The silence that followed was deafening - not a voice, nor a sound was to be heard. It occurred to me that perhaps no-one else had been affected; maybe it was just our house - my portion of our house - that had fared badly. It was also quite possible that, in my disoriented state, I could have blown the true effects out of proportion in my mind. Perhaps I would wait until morningI slowly peeled the futon from my face, to be met with a suffocating breath of the very distinct 'earthquake smell' (as it was to become known) - age old dust, rabble, ruin.

At this stage, one of the Japanese guys who was living on the second floor of our house, with whom no-one had ever exchanged a word until that day, yelled out, "大丈夫ですか" (Are you alright?). To my relief, I heard the replies of Hannah, Zac and Jun, indicating that they were all alive. Next, a flicker of light, and Zac calling to someone to light a match. A brief pause, then moments later his voice again, this time urgently, "No. Don't light a match - don't. I can smell gas everywhere". Jun was the first one to motivate himself towards the goal of escaping our earthquaked house. We heard muffled sounds as he stumbled in the direction of the front door, picking his way over fallen objects in the dark. Then, what we had all feared but not expected - the door was stuck. We were prisoners in our own house. He instructed Hannah and I to try each of our sliding glass doors; that he would attempt the back exit, and to hurry. All I could think of was the comment Hannah's boyfriend had once made about old Japanese houses - that it was not uncommon to have a community of snakes and rats residing in the hollow space separating first and second floors. Unaware as I was of the extent of the damage, I was at least very certain in my assumption that areas of the roof had collapsed. Before long, I was petrified by visions of feral creatures swarming in masses amongst my clothes, my sheets, my floor I couldn't move.

Hannah called to me to climb into her room, and as I felt better at the thought of having someone by my side, I gathered enough courage to leave my bed and began the seemingly long journey

separating our two rooms. No sooner had I scrambled over the rubble and around the fallen fusuma doors into Hannah's bed that we experienced our first aftershock. I'm not sure as to the magnitude of it, or how much time had elapsed since the first tremblor, but in my then fully alert state it was the scariest moment of my life. I was sure I was going to die. Hannah and I frantically pulled a fusuma door over our bodies in a vain attempt to protect ourselves from any falling debris, and lay there clutching each other in desperation. We could hear light objects cascading onto our cardboard barrier as the ground underneath us reluctantly shook in response to the upheaval, but fortunately the tremor tapered off before any more damage occurred.

Continuing our search for a way of escape, we discovered that in addition to the fact that Hannah's sliding door was also jammed, the house seemed to be leaning on a strange and abnormal angle that none of us had been aware of before. Moments later, Jun communicated to us that he was in the toilet, but it appeared impossible to leave from that exit either. Looking towards this direction, Hannah and I were shocked to discover that we could see his silhouette; that although there should have been a wall separating the two areas, Jun was visible to us! Realising that the wall had fallen down, we became aware of the extent of the damage and we began to panic.

At that moment, the beam of a torch came shining in through the glass doors, tentatively searching for any survivors. To us, then, it symbolized hope, a glimmer of freedom. A voice soon followed, asking if we were alright. By then on the verge of panicking, I yelled out, "No. We're not OK" (actually intending to communicate that none of us were injured, however we seemed to be trapped and could they help us escape?) Hannah quickly rectified the situation by telling me to shut-up, and then called, "None of us are hurt, but we can't get out." We then climbed back over all the rubble to where they were waiting for us, upon which they smashed a portion of the glass, making a hole large enough for our climb to safety.

Freedom.

TRUSS activities in the post-earthquake period

Morishima Ryoko (f)JAPAN
Kobe University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

TRUSS was engaged in post earthquake relief activities, in collaboration with the Kobe University Foreign Student Counselling centre, from the 15th February, 1995. TRUSS is a student organization which was established one and half years ago and comprises of students from universities in and around Kobe. The main objective of TRUSS is to foster cultural exchanges between Japanese students and foreign students through supplying support in their day to day lives. TRUSS has many sections, such as volunteer event and training sections.

During the post earthquake period, the relief activities of **TRUSS** included the collection of information, and the separation, storage, and distribution of relief goods at the Foreign Student Centre. Here we met with a number of foreign students. In the initial period, they were coming from places where water and gas supplies were disrupted and thus seemed very tense and worried. The centre was quite far from their homes and because transport was disrupted it was difficult for them to come all the way to collect relief goods. In addition to this they were busy writing reports or preparing for entrance examinations. As a result, those foreign students coming to the centre also took relief goods for their friends.

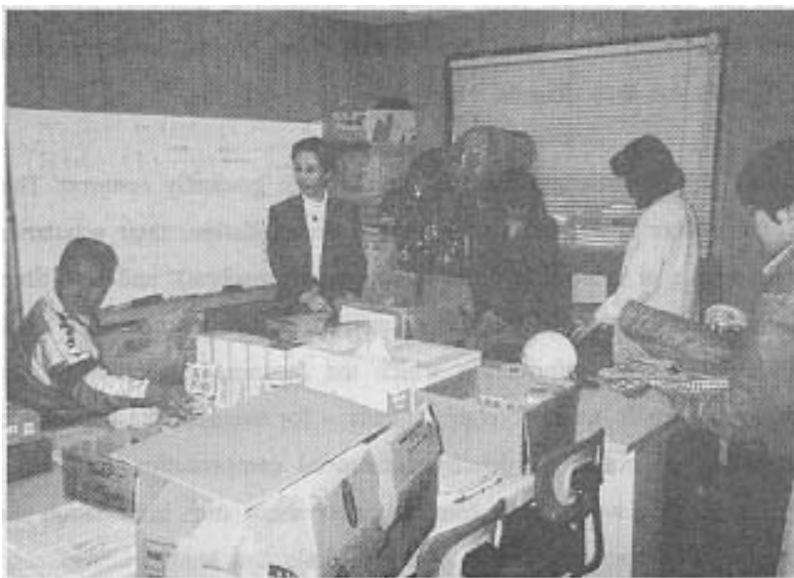
As the days passed, the lifelines and transport means were gradually restored. The foreign students coming to the centre were now more worried about accommodation, their scholarships (which make up a considerable source of income in order to support themselves), and part-time jobs rather than relief goods. During this relief activity which spanned over two months the TRUSS members were surprised to discover that the information which the Japanese generally assume to be common knowledge was not known to many foreign students - for example the significance of red, yellow or green labels pasted on buildings, details of financial compensation provided, etc. If they had close Japanese friends, they would have come to know about such information much faster. In the case of emergencies, information plays an important role and human beings can form a chain to pass on such important information.

During this emergency period, as a member of TRUSS, I came across many foreign students and strongly felt that many of the activities conducted by TRUSS need to be increased further. To help each other is, beyond a doubt, necessary. However, for this one needs to know one another and develop a rapport in everyday life. The student community should not be divided into exclusive groups of foreign students and Japanese students. I feel that the normal campus life here should involve more interaction between foreign and Japanese students which will, in turn, form a base from which they can help each other in case of emergencies.

This earthquake has brought many issues into the spotlight such as the problems of aged people, physically handicapped people, and foreign nationals permanently residing in Japan, which were previously ignored. These problems should not be overlooked as temporary ones. One should do his/her best to change the current situation, and I believe that TRUSS is one such organization.

School has re-opened and we have welcomed newcomers. Campus life is back to normal. In the light of the earthquake, I strongly feel the necessity of developing grass roots level exchange

between foreign students and Japanese students through TRUSS activities.



At International
Student Center ,
Kobe University

Destruction, struggle, and friendship - Impressions of The Great Hanshin Quake

Mu Yu (f) China
Kobe Gakuin University
(Translated by Stefan Costmeijer)

On the seventeenth of January, most people were occupied after their New Year's celebrations with the beginnings of another year. I was eagerly awaiting my first trip home to China in one and a half years. However, with one enormous rumbling tremor, all tranquility was destroyed. The unexpected quake not only wrought unthinkable losses in terms of lives and property, but it also left an irreparable psychological scar on many. On the positive side though, it was very moving to experience the compassion and camaraderie of the victims as they worked hard while ignoring their fears, demonstrating the great capacity of Man to overcome disaster. I lived in Nishi-ku, Kobe and though I do not wish to dwell on the fear and the plight of the experience of being a temporary refugee, there are many things that I will never be able to forget about the experience which I should write down.

At the time of the quake, I ran outside after the terrible shaking had ceased, uncertain of what to do, and stood out with the others who were crying in the freezing wind. The landlord next door came out handing out blankets and food and comforted us by saying that everything would be alright as long as we all worked together. Those may have been simple words but they meant a lot to us foreign students, being separated from our families, and were more precious than jewels at the time, boosting our spirits immensely. The following day, January 18th, I was visited at the dormitory by my *senpai* in the same research laboratory, Doctor Nishimura, and his wife. They advised me to bring just my plane ticket (which I had purchased to leave on the 24th) and my passport and invited me to stay with them till my departure. Feeling very grateful, I went to the Nishimuras' parents' home in Kakogawa where they all helped me out for the next five days until I could finally go back to China. Doctor Nishimura's dissertation thesis was destroyed by a fire at the publishing house where it was been printed in Nagada-ku, but his mind was hardly occupied with that at all. He went through the process of contacting various places on my behalf until he finally decided that I would be most certain to reach China if I caught the 'Rout' from Fukuoka to Peking. This act of kindness certainly wasn't the Nishimura's responsibility. But the mother insisted, "Your family in China is waiting for you. Please go back where it is safe and forget about your study in Japan for now"

On the 23rd, the Nishimuras took me to the station where I boarded the *shinkansen* for Fukuoka. I wasn't able to say a word as we parted so, instead, I prayed sincerely for my friends' peace of heart.

I met with my family again for the first time in a year in the midst of a traditional Chinese Spring, but I couldn't enjoy it as usual - I was worrying about the people of Kobe. But, I thought, if I went back to Japan, what kind of lifestyle would await me? And yet before I knew it, I had boarded a plane bound for Japan once again where my friends in trouble and a lot of things for me to learn still remained.

When I emerged from the airport I was just in time to see the setting sun's rays glistening atop the ocean. From the window of a cozy JR train I watched the beautiful ocean, beginning to feel at ease

once more. There was a substitute bus for the train from Sumiyoshi to Nada and everyone lined up orderly to catch it. Only the wrecked homes still reminded me of the awful impact of the quake - The others' faces showed no sign of sadness or of anger, so my own resolve also grew.

I visited the research laboratory for the first time in weeks, and met up with my *senpai* and *sensei*; I was very much relieved to find the laboratory had been returned to working order again. On the other hand, however, I felt quite bad when I saw the conditions that my colleagues had endured in my absence which had enabled our work to recommence; surviving without gas or water while they worked.

It's now been a year and a half since I've come to Japan. I really love this beautiful city of Kobe and if I have time I would like to go and see Sannomiya, Harbourland, Port Island and take some pictures. However, due to the earthquake I naturally can't right now so I guess I can only wait till things are back to normal again. The other day I felt like going to take some pictures of the collapsed buildings so I took my camera and although the environment was certainly not one of beauty, I was moved by a different scene. Everywhere, rather than reflecting on the sadness of the *fait accompli* people were hard at work restoring the area; the peoples' determination succinctly expressed on signs proclaiming *Ganbaroya!* and with newly opened shops called *Fight!*

I felt a real spring breeze passing over the land.

As a foreign student in Japan I am working hard at obtaining knowledge - both in my field and of Japanese culture. I am lucky to have survived the great quake, and though it was terrible in one sense, I was able to experience a lot from it. In particular, I witnessed the determined figures of the Japanese showing me just how Japan, a country of so few resources, was able to return to prosperity after the War. I think that this mentality of determination to overcome difficulty is a real human asset. I shall never forget the seventeenth of January 1995 nor the figures of people hard at work restarting their lives amidst the ruins. I pray that a beautiful Kobe is realised soon.

All that I lost in the earthquake

Oh Mi Young (f) KOREA
Kobe University
(Translated by Hannah Lee)

I was awoken by a shaking motion. My room was pitch black and I couldn't see a thing. I had no idea what was happening, so I decided to go back to sleep. Then it happened. It sounded as if a bomb was going off - and then the whole house began to shake violently. I thought it would soon stop, but I was proved wrong. The ceiling and a wall suddenly collapsed with great force, making me shudder in fear. When I realised the wall had fallen, and that the floor was on a lean, I wrapped my futon around me and took cover in the space between the floor and the wall. I can remember hazily wondering if this is what it is like to die.

The faces of my family floated into my head - even that of my dead Grandfather. My house was still shaking and seemed as if it would never stop. I was quivering with fear, yet it was only then that I began to yell out for help. As if the heavens were listening, the shaking stopped. I couldn't see clearly, but I knew my room was a mess. Wandering around, I stepped on something sharp and felt pain. Because I was so scared, I couldn't think of what to do. However, realising I wanted to get out of the house as soon as possible, I went into the toilet and started yelling "Help! Help!" out of the window. I heard other people also yelling for help from the building next door. They were trapped under their collapsed house. Hearing some more voices from a street close by, I felt slightly relieved knowing that there were people who had been able to escape.

The smell of gas was getting stronger. However, because I lived in a females only apartment, all the windows were protected with iron railing and I couldn't escape no matter how hard I tried. While waiting for rescue in the toilet there had been numerous aftershocks, and I was close to tears. The neighbour's wall, which I could see from the toilet window, appeared to be getting closer and closer with each tremble. I tried to think of what I would do if it collapsed on top of the dormitory. I wondered what everyone else was doing. I was feeling very depressed when from out of the dark I saw the figures of two men. They told me to be calm and wait, so I finally began to relax and waited in silence for them to get me out. They tried to wrench the iron bars off the toilet window, but couldn't move them. They then tried the bars across the kitchen window. Whether it was because the whole house was on a lean, I don't know, but they were able to move those bars. I lay down sideways and was only just able to be pulled through the small space. Before they rescued me, I was told to "Be careful of your feet", so I took some slippers from the toilet and followed after them.

Looking around outside I saw that a friend and another person who lived in front of my room had already been rescued. While talking about how scared we were, we hugged each other. We were shivering from the cold and the fear, and somehow the sun had already risen and it was light. It was only at that time that I first looked at my surroundings. The over-bridges had completely collapsed where the JR trains passed at Rokko-michi, and all around the telephone poles were on a lean. Here and there fires were starting up.

The apartment building where we lived had collapsed, and what had been two storeys was now one. I had lived in a room on the second floor, but the window I had escaped from was now

at ground level. It was something I had not even considered before. After some time, the aftershocks stopped and people that had been hiding in their houses came out. The expressions on the faces were that of refugees of war. However, after some time, people starting running around busily trying to help. The streets were filled with people helping those trapped under fallen houses, finding relief shelters, and trying to ring family and work friends. We watched on vacantly.

I felt a sticky feeling from my foot. I looked down and saw that blood was oozing out of my dirt-stained feet. My friend had also cut her hands and feet when she jumped from the second floor, and we stood on the road with blood all around us. After asking the man who lived in front of our apartment, we were given a towel which we ripped up and bandaged ourselves with, using the rest to wrap around us. We then started walking around the neighbourhood. Our landlord's house had also collapsed. All of the rooms of the apartments on the first floor had collapsed, and I could see legs sticking out through the window. There were no replies to our calls; they were already dead. It was the first dead body I had ever seen. I started shaking.

One of my friends lived directly under my room. I looked around the collapsed apartment for a long time, but there was no space for her to have survived. I asked some neighbours to come and help, but all I got were replies that preference was being given to helping the living. I felt it was my duty to rescue my friend as soon as possible, but given the situation there was nothing I could do. I felt terribly sad at not being able to do anything. Wu Jie and I had become friends when we went to the same Japanese language school three years ago. We had the same last name and had entered university at the same time, all the time becoming closer and closer friends. We went to school together, went shopping together, we shared food and swapped CDs. When we were sad, we always consulted each other and now

A friend of one of my friends who lived close by came running towards us out of breath. She told us that there were places where the public phones were still working, but that they only took ten yen coins, so she gave us several. She then left with the woman from the room opposite mine. My friend and I divided the coins in half so we had four each, and went and lined up with everyone else outside a working phone. It was finally my tum after two hours of waiting and I dialed the number of my aunt who lives in Kyoto. She wasn't there so I rang up a friend who also lived in Kyoto. "My house collapsed but I'm OK. Can you please tell my Aunt?" With that the phone cut out.

From my feet up, my body began to freeze. I was still in my pyjamas and my body was starting to respond to the coldness of mid-January. I was still wearing the towel I had been given that morning, and I was walking around still in my slippers. We went back to my apartment to try to get my friend's body out; we called to her, but it was to no avail. My landlord and his family had been saved and had gone elsewhere. The women from next door had just found the dead body of her child, and left immediately for the relief centre at Nada Primary School. We also decided to set out for the shelter. However, sitting there, I couldn't do anything except get cold. My friend's foot was starting to hurt, and from out of nowhere a woman appeared with a first-aid box, but because of the degree of the injury she told us we should go to the hospital. However the hospital was filled with the dead and people with more serious injuries than that of my friend, so she was only able to get it disinfected. My injury was more serious than I had previously thought. I could see through to the bone on my ankle, and as it was hard to walk I took refuge at the Primary School where I waited until it was a little better. However I was so worried about my friends and family that I decided to head back to the apartment. I was worried about seeing the neighbour who had found her child's body, so I stopped on the way back to the apartment and decided to leave my friend, "protecting" her from where I was. At that time I saw a sempai

(senior) from my club pass by. I was so happy to see him and ran to say hello. He lived close by and so was able to lend me a change of clothes. After saying good-bye, I went back to Nada Primary School where I stayed the night. I dreamt that night at the shelter. In my dream my friend Wu Jie was watching me, crying.

After a long night, morning finally broke. I was scared due to the many aftershocks, but with the morning light I felt calmer. We heard we could receive blankets and food from the Ward Office, so I set out with the people I had spent the night next to. We received more than enough blankets, but the food was far from sufficient. Food for the eight of us consisted of eight mandarins. I was cold and hungry, and feeling sorry for myself. After receiving our rations we went back to the shelter where the number of people had more than doubled from the night before. I secured my spot, and helped to put cardboard under where the old were sleeping in order to keep out the cold from the concrete. I also cleared away the rubbish and broken glass bottles. I taped the windows where the glass had fractured so it wouldn't fall out. When I looked at my watch, it was already past midday. The night before the earthquake I had been up late reading and had fallen asleep with my watch still on. I was the only person in the shelter with a watch and it came in use many times.

I had nothing to do and soon became bored so I decided to go back to my apartment. I wanted to ring up and see if my friend in Kyoto had called my aunt, but I couldn't with the hundred yen coins I had. So without calling I went back to the apartment where I saw many people wandering around. Thinking that they had found another body, I went closer, where I saw some Korean sempai (senior). I was so happy to see them. They had seen my apartment and thought I had died. They had gone inside and seen I wasn't there so went to the hospital looking for me. They then came back to my apartment and retrieved my passport and airplane ticket. I was told off for not contacting them, but when I explained that I didn't have any money and that because of the damage I thought it would be safer to go with my friend everywhere, they didn't say anything. Later I left the relief shelter and went back to my sempai's house in Kita Ward.

The next day I went to school to report that I was OK and then went to the Business Faculty to tell them of the death of my friend Wu Jie. I asked them to get in contact with her family in China and with her guarantor. It wasn't possible to get her body out quickly without doing so. At that time I felt the death of Wu Jie in my heart and wasn't able to stop the tears. I went by car with my sempai back to have another look at the apartment. I talked for a short time with the parents of another person I had been living with who had come to get their luggage. I told them that my friend's body was still trapped in the building. However, because the apartment had collapsed completely, they told me that a specialist would have to be brought in, and that required the attendance of the parents or guarantor. I had no choice but to give up that day and go back to my sempai's place.

After going back to my sempai's, I was told that a boat was leaving the next day from Meriken Park and that most of the Korean students taking refuge were going to leave on that and go back home. I wanted to wait one more day until they had retrieved Wu Jie's body, but with no food and having to leave later on my own, I knew it was impossible. So, without being selfish, I asked my sempai who was staying behind to look after Wu Jie and I decided to leave with the rest of my sempais. That night I had a dream that Wu Jie had come to me crying and begging me to come and help her. It was the third day since the earthquake.

On the night of the twentieth I wasn't able to sleep well and woke up at four in the morning to get ready to go home to Korea. We went to Meriken Park, and I got on a ferry bound for Kansai

International Airport. I can't explain the emotions I felt when I left Kobe Port. It was as if I was never going to come back.

Once back in Korea I heard that they were able to get Wu Jie's body out safely and I finally felt peace of mind and was able to relax for ten days or so. On February 2, I went back to Japan in order to find out what was happening at university and to get the subject of my reports. I finished my reports without incident and took part in the Memorial Service on March 17. The photos of thirty nine students and two staff from Kobe University were displayed on the platform. After the ceremony, I talked with Wu Jie's mother who had come over from China. I was crying so hard that I wasn't able to say much. Later, I went back to my apartment with Ms Shinnai, Wu Jie's teacher from when we were at Japanese language school, and we talked about many things. She told me "The sadness ends today. Today you have been separated from Wu Jie, and from now on you must try and work for the both of you." I nodded at this without saying a word.

Wu Jie came back to me in a dream. It had been a long time since I had seen her face. I knew she was dead, but it was as if she was still alive. When I woke, I knew she had gone to heaven.

The earthquake has given me the chance to think about many things. We humans are too used to living in civilisation. Without understanding the importance of nature, we destroy it so that we can live in comfort. I don't know how to explain humans, however for us living in Kobe, even if we are not able to see it, we have all changed. Living in a difficult situation, we are still able to help each other out, and unite our hearts to work together to conquer the hardships. Even though the earthquake was a bad experience, it gave us this important chance. It was the compensation for the loss of the many precious lives. Even now with every aftershock, the scared memories inside me are revived. However because I am sure that in the future those experiences will help me in many ways, I am trying to fight it head on.

Finally, as I bring this story to its end, once more I would like to pray for the repose of my friend's and everyone's souls.

Chaos

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Yoshiharu Ota (M) JAPAN
Kwansei Gakuin University
Office of International Programs
(Translated by Kazuyuki Kiryu)

On the day that the earthquake occurred, I was living on the sixth floor of an apartment house in Tanaka-cho, Higashinada Ward, Kobe City. The building, located in front of JR Setsumotoyama Station, was completely destroyed by the earthquake. It felt as if I had been thrown into a mixer, and when dawn came I was very surprised to see the surroundings from the balcony. Most buildings were leaning, and wooden houses were flattened. The sky had turned gray because of the dust and long columns of smoke could be seen rising up in the air in several places. It was ominously quiet all around; no police officers could be seen and no fire engines came. I could hear only odd echoes of people shouting for each other.

My wife tried to escape outside, but she returned to the room saying she couldn't because the first floor had caved in. At this point we thought of trying the emergency exit, and so I went downstairs. However, upon reaching the first floor, I discovered it had gratings fastened around it, which I thought made it look like a big bird cage. The lower floors were filled with the smell of gas and I thought there was danger of a gas explosion.

Most of my neighbours couldn't open their doors when I called to them, but we finally managed to escape by breaking down the dividing boards on the balconies. My family escaped with nothing but the clothes we were wearing. I went to the office, and wore nothing but my pyjamas for the next four days. After a moment's discussion with my neighbour as to what to do next, I took refuge with my parents in the gym of Motoyama Daiichi Elementary School.

When it comes to a large scale natural disaster, people such as police officers, firemen, and local government officials who have to cope with the situation at the very core, become victims as well. This, put together with the suspension of traffic, doubled the delay, so that basic action could not be taken effectively.

I asked a colleague from my office who lived in the neighborhood to go by car to see what had happened at university. But because the traffic was so heavy, he returned without having reached the university.

As my car was in the parking lot on the first floor of the apartment, it was completely destroyed. I hadn't seen what it looked like until today - impossible to use again. So I thought about what to do next, and decided to go on foot to the parking lot in front of JR Nishinomiya Station to fetch my motor scooter I usually use for commuting to work. The area along Route 2 to Nishinomiya Station was indeed a highway of rubble, a series of scenes unbearable to a person like me who had been brought up in Kobe. Unconsciously, my eyes filled with tears.

On the way, I found JR trains off their rails at two points, but saw no-one who took much notice of the sight. Normally such an accident would have been covered by the mass media in great force. It left me thinking that the world had turned upside-down.

I dropped in at my wife's parents' house in Tachibana, Amagasaki City on my scooter and informed them that everyone was all right, and then went to the university. My wife's parents had been worried about us, and had just written a note to send to the TV station inquiring about our safety.

It was around 7 p.m. when I arrived at Kwansei Gakuin University, and I was relieved to find that the buildings looked as if they were still firmly standing. It was, however, impossible to enter my office because the large lockers and the shelves had all fallen, documents had been scattered, and the computers had been thrown to the floor. Later when I met a section chief of a different department, he said he had also lost his house and evacuated his family to his office that day. When I heard from him that one of my colleagues, who lived in Takarazuka City, had come to the office that afternoon, I was relieved that at least one of my colleagues was safe. In any case, I had to find a way to enter the office and so I threw away any unnecessary documents for the time being into the corridor, finishing what I could do for that day. I then paid a visit to the houses in which guest professors and visiting researchers from abroad were living. As our university has a comparatively well-developed community of foreign teachers, I thought I could ascertain the safety of most by visiting a few leading figures. They asked about temporary shelter and the condition of the water, but since I myself didn't have any preparatory knowledge about this kind of emergency, I told them to take shelter in the nearest elementary school if they felt the situation was dangerous. I feel ashamed that I didn't have any preparation for such a crisis.

I had almost no means to confirm the safety of overseas students at the time. "Don't die, don't die you are young enough to have survived," I prayed in my mind and cheered myself up by thinking that they were young and healthy, and returned to the shelter in Higashinada Ward. The city was in total darkness when I crossed Ashiya river to the west. The darkness added to the insecurity in my mind, and I asked myself, "What should I do if the worst has happened to them?" I had no answer.

We started putting things in order in the office on the second day after the earthquake, but as there was only seven of us, only three people were able to do this. We were not in a situation where we could do work as normal, because we had no way of making phone calls, but were however able to receive them. At university, with the chairman of the Board of Trustees in the central role, we summoned all teachers and staff who could come to the university, to a meeting where we exchanged information to establish a plan of action.

From the third or fourth day up until now, we were very busy confirming the safety of the overseas students, repairing the office and preparing and managing for the entrance examinations and the routine work for the preparation of the new school year in April.

We weren't able to answer questions from city officials and outside organizations trying to confirm the safety and whereabouts of overseas students. We understood that they needed information, but we did not know the exact situations of the students. Some of them had returned to their home countries. Nevertheless we were urged to provide all information that we knew. We were constantly being harassed by such calls, as if, taking a traffic accident for example, the victim lying on the street was asked, "Inform us how much blood you have lost and how many bones are broken. I will help you depending on the damage you have suffered." The support we received depended on our replies. It seems to be difficult for people watching TV to understand the situation in which the files on the overseas students are scattered about and the computers fail. In the end we felt like assuming a so-what attitude; thinking, "If you want to know it so much, come and count the numbers for yourself!" For the time being, we refused to answer inquiries about the numbers of victims and homeless - it was impossible to give an accurate answer to them - or we only

answered generally, "It seems that many houses of the students fell down". It perhaps sounds strange. However, I heard stories about fires that broke out on a large scale in Kobe and that there weren't enough fire engines in Kobe to handle them all. Therefore they tried to call for more. Finally, when the call got through to somewhere (to Tokyo, maybe?) the response was "How many do you need?" But again while they were trying to count how much help they would need, the fires increased beyond control. I don't know whether it's true or not, but the story is convincing. There still remains many problems on how to respond to a large-scale disaster, such as how to inquire about and confirm the safety of everyone.

If asked to propose ideas for measures to be adopted against a future earthquake, I must confess that I still have no idea. The earthquake this time happened early in the morning; most people hadn't yet left for work, and it was winter. Measures would have to vary completely depending on situations such as whether it occurred during class hours or an examination period, or during summer vacation.

Especially in the case of overseas students and guest professor, (we found difficulties making sure of their safety this time) unless we form a community of the universities or nearby towns, we can imagine that they are apt to feel isolated and won't know where they should go. Fortunately this time no overseas students at our university died. However it is necessary in some way to inform overseas students in advance how the university can support them, and what it cannot do.

The next problem is how to give support financially. The problem of accommodation is especially vital. I think that making the students feel at ease and confident is also an important issue. The importance of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorders) is often spoken of, but I don't think it's relevant to discuss emotional support without also discussing the essential problem of practical financial support. Failure of timely enforcement of measures such as reduction and exemption of tuitions and special financial aid is thought to give rise to students' loss of identity with the university, and the fundamental distrust of Japan. This time the "Association of International Education, Japan" granted "urgent financial assistance to foreign students" who were affected badly by the disaster. This was a far more timely response than we had ever thought possible from the Ministry of Education. As a section chief in charge, I was delighted by it because I had been groping my way in the dark, trying to find measures for the relief of overseas students; the Ministry of Education made the application of measures simple. I believe this measure was significant enough to be recorded as one of the best policies in the history of the Ministry of Education.

We found the existing organizations to protect against disasters such as local authorities, police and fire agency were almost useless, especially during the first few hours after the earthquake. What is important is how to protect overseas students during these hours. This is a common problem with Japanese students too, but what differs is that overseas students are sometimes isolated in the regional communities. How to prevent them from this isolation is also an important issue. Developing good relationships with your neighbors in urban life has not been examined from the viewpoint of crisis management. After hearing stories about overseas students who played an active part in rescuing people living in their regional community, I felt encouraged, but simultaneously felt as if we are thrust into a new problem about association in a community toward a future large-scale disaster.

As a final point. Universities in disaster areas will be in a situation in which they are cut off from information given by newspapers, TV, etc (especially in cases when people like me become the victims of such a disaster, they will lose the ways and means to store news and put it in order).

Information faxed by JAFSA members, CFNFS members, neighboring local governments and other groups and organizations helped us a lot, and the information turned into immediate, useful, "living" information for our students.

* JAFSA: Japan Association for Foreign Student Affairs

CFNFS: Corporate Friendship Network for Foreign Students

Dreams on Pyre

Prashant Pardeshi (m) INDIA
Kobe University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

On February 2, 1994, I received a letter from the Ministry of Education in India, informing me that I had been offered a Monbusho Scholarship to conduct research at Kobe University. I had been to Japan earlier and had visited several times since.

The Japanese way of writing "Kobe" is two Chinese characters, namely "God" and "door". Indeed, as the name suggests, it would not be an exaggeration to call Kobe the 'door to heaven'. Kobe is a city extremely cosmopolitan in nature, where people of different countries reside in harmony. Thus I was very happy for the opportunity to study at Kobe University which is located in such a beautiful city.

In Kobe I made new friends from various countries. Ten months flew by, with friendly parties and socialising, and before I knew it the time had come to prepare for the entrance examination into the Ph.D programme. I had to finish my paper before January 18, 1995, which was the deadline for submitting applications. On January 16, I finished my paper and went to bed. I could not sleep immediately because I was thinking about my schedule for the next few days. I had to remove a final point from my paper and hence I set my alarm for 6:00am. On January 17, 1995 at 5:46am I got up when the bed started rocking. I jumped onto the floor and looked around. I found that the walls were swinging like a swing. Books fell from the bookshelf, and the TV and video also toppled to the floor. My room was rocking as if it was being stampeded by thousands of elephants. For a moment, I felt that the four storeyed building would collapse and that I would die. I did not know what to do as it was my first experience with an earthquake. I heard the screaming of some girls staying on the second floor and with that I came to my senses. Everyone rushed to the kitchen. It appeared to be the safest place as it is a single storeyed building. I also decided to do so and got up. My hand was trembling and as it was so dark it took some time to open the door. When it opened I rushed out and ran into the wall on the opposite side. I got up and hurried to the kitchen. It was a pleasant surprise to see all my friends safe. All these things, which happened in the very short span of forty seconds, were difficult to comprehend.

We switched on the TV and started watching the news. I could see the happiness of having survived on the faces all around me. I immediately called my parents and told them that I was safe. After that, I tried to contact my friends in Kobe to enquire about their safety, however could not get through. We watched the news on TV the whole day. The live telecast of the damage depressed me. I was constantly reminded of the famous Indian philosophical saying that life is uncertain and no one except GOD knows when it will come to an end. The residents of Kobe, the door to heaven, had to watch their dreams being burnt on the pyre before their own eyes.

* PYRE: A combustible heap (as of wood) for burning a dead body as a funeral rite;
broadly: a pile to be burnt.

L pyra, fr. Gk, fr pre fire - more at FIRE

(Source: Webster's Third New International Dictionary)

My first days spent in Kobe

Qin Qing Hong (f) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Hannah Lee)

Looking out of the airplane window I saw many islands full of lights. This was Japan, the symbol of modern art and civilisation, and the place young people yearn for. I had waited for this for close to two years and had at last passed the strict examinations which enabled me to study abroad. My husband and I boarded the airplane bound for Japan on January 13, 1995.

Our house in Japan was very small, but it was a new starting point.

I like walking around, and on our second day my husband took me into Sannomiya, the business /shopping area in Kobe. On the third day (January 16), a Japanese friend invited me to a classy restaurant where I was introduced to Japanese food. We later went to the Suma Aquarium.

Dawn on the fourth day (January 17) saw the occurrence of a one in a thousand year huge earthquake. In a short instant, as if the earth was angry and was shaking violently, thousands died. Our small room didn't collapse, but we were no longer able to live there. Aftershocks were constantly happening and because we didn't know if our house was going to collapse or not, we fled to an evacuation centre and started what was to be three months of living there. In the port town of Kobe, the water supply was cut off so fire-fighters couldn't fight the fires. People watched with pain as their houses and property went up in flames. I spent my first night in the evacuation centre in the dining hall at Kobe University. Up on the hill, the University had fared well and still had electricity and water. There was nowhere to sleep, so I slept on one of the tables. Originally, it was a place where I had imagined I would come to study; now it was an evacuation centre. It was my first time to Japan and I considered it to be an "interesting" reception party! However, scared and frightened, my fears about life from then on were overwhelmingly strong.

A Japanese friend, braving the danger, came to see me bringing some food. It wasn't much, but at the time it was a necessity. The number of evacuees increased, and eventually we all gathered together in the gymnasium. Here I was an evacuee along with the Takaoka family. It was hard living as refugees. We put blankets on the floor, and close to a hundred of us slept there, fully clothed. There was no hot food, and so every day we ate obento (Japanese boxed lunch), bread, and drank milk. I didn't know how long the situation would continue for, or how long it would be before we could find a new place to live, so the boredom was unbearable.

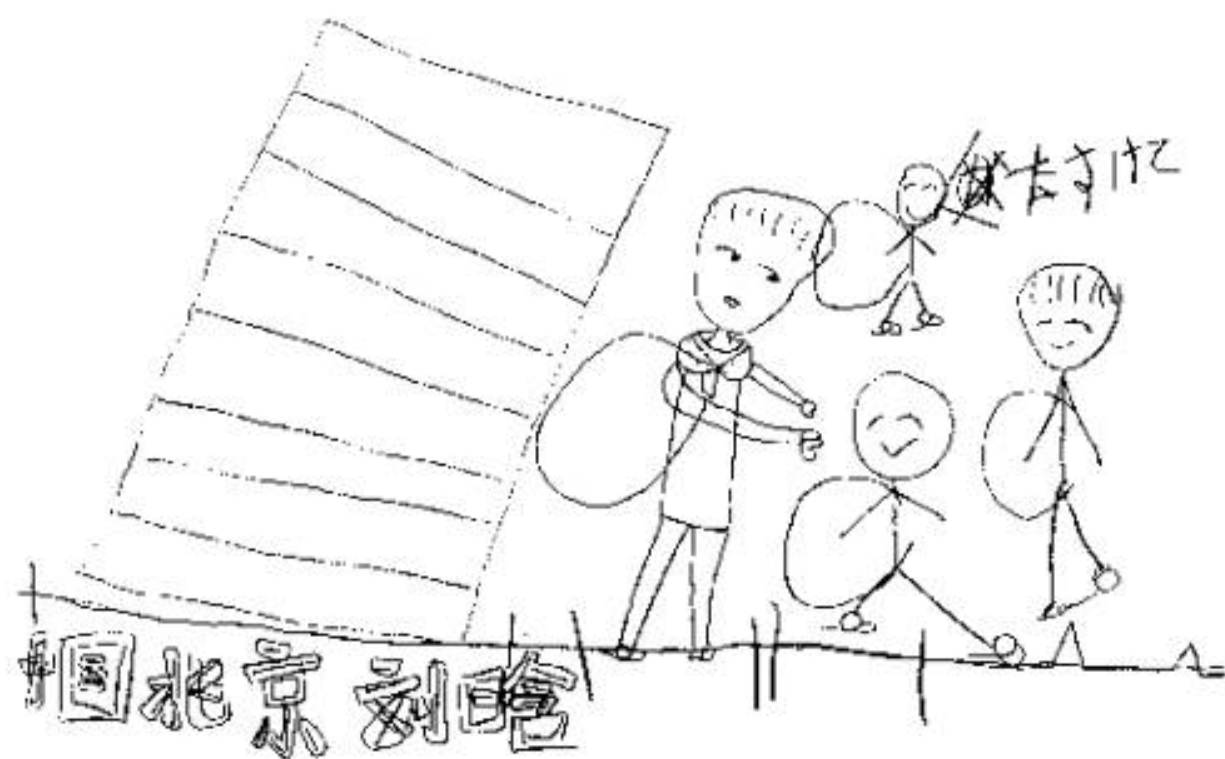
The Japanese people around us slowly became aware that we were Chinese. I had only just come to Japan and hardly spoke a word of Japanese. I mainly spent my days learning Japanese. Mrs Takaoka was learning Chinese from my husband, and she became an enthusiastic Japanese teacher for me. It may have had something to do with living in the evacuation centre, but the first words I learnt were related to food. Later, at the Kobe University Foreign Students Office I was told about an evacuation centre at the Kobe Student Centre, so we moved there, where the environment was vastly improved. There was water and electricity, we could cook our own food and have a bath. We even had a room for just the two of us. Already several Korean and Chinese students were living there, so they were able to show us around the centre. NHK were providing free

international phone calls for the centre, and I calmed down a lot after talking to friends and family from home. A friend staying there even told me where I could get a part-time job working at a petrol station not far away. It was tiring, but I felt complete. I was glad because the job was helping my Japanese, and at the same time I was earning money for the family. Prices are very expensive in Japan so we would not be able to live if I stayed at home doing nothing.

Good news started pouring in. First of all we found a new place to live. It is in a company dormitory in Konan which decided to allow foreign students in. It is cheap and convenient to transport. Then from April, I began studying at Kobe University. Just thinking about being at Kobe University as a student made me excited. I have always been close to books. I studied in China until I was 24. After graduating, my job was involved with physics, so I had made it along reading all the time. However, I wasn't really suited to study physics and it didn't go well. I changed jobs and started to work as a Russian translator. Then, too, I always had a dictionary and a book in hand.

Now at the age of 30, I am studying at Kobe University, and am learning as a primary school student would, the fifty sounds of Japanese. My husband is involved with earthquake research, so with his Professor they investigated the Kobe earthquake, with their findings published in the Kobe Newspaper. It is his compensation for his hard work everyday over these last two months.

Kobe still has scars, but the cherry blossoms have just started to bloom. They decorate the disaster in Kobe and warm the hearts of those who experienced the earthquake. The beautiful spring hasn't forgotten Kobe, and I too feel I want to contribute my strength to the rebuilding of this city. I decided when the cherry blossoms were out in full bloom that I will try and fight to help, with confidence and hope.



Courage to Cope

Roby, K.K. (m) INDIA
University of Osaka Prefecture
(Translated by Roby K.K)

"My bed is shaking. Is somebody playing? Who is it? Or am I dreaming?" I slipped out of sleep. "No it is not a dream. The bed is still shaking. Not only the bed but also the whole building is shaking. Oh! It is an earthquake. Nature is playing." Some small items fell from the table. The shaking continued for a few more seconds. Fear passed through me. It was 5:46am on the 17th of January 1995. It was my first experience of an earthquake.

Later I found out that my place, in Sakai, was far away from the epicentre of the earthquake. I also found out that the shaking in Kobe was not only horizontal in direction, but also in the vertical direction at a higher magnitude, making it a nightmare for those who lived there, destroying a large area and taking many lives with it. It was a real disaster. I share the deep sorrow with those affected by the quake.

The rescue operations, and the care and support given to the affected people by others, is really commendable. The recovery and rebuilding process is proceeding at a fast rate.

Disasters are part of the parcel of life. They can visit at any time without invitation. Let us have the courage to cope with it. Gambatte kudasai ne.

Report on the Hanshin Earthquake

"What I did when the earthquake struck"

Shi Le Ping (m) CHINA

Kobe University

(Translated by Sean Ellwood)

*** I was suddenly thrown to the floor**

Nineteen years ago I experienced the Tang Shen earthquake in China. I had no idea that nineteen years later I would also experience the Great Hanshin Earthquake in Kobe. The night before the earthquake I went to bed early, and slipped quietly off to sleep. Suddenly, I was thrown out of bed by a powerful force. I instantly tried to struggle upright, but there was no way I could fight against that power. "Earthquake!" I wondered if this was to be my last day alive.

I wrapped a thick futon around me, and in the pitch-dark made my way down the staircase. Fifth floor, fourth floor, third floor I at last made it to the first floor, but there was a vending machine lying on its side like an iron coffin in the hallway, blocking my escape. I climbed over it and finally fled from the Sakura Bank's employee dormitory.

After a while many people began coming out of the surrounding buildings and I could hear a woman crying. It was Mrs. Fujiwara, the dormitory's cook who was severely injured. In order to make breakfast for the people living in the dormitory, the cooks come to work at 5:00am every morning. The earthquake caused a set of steel shelves to fall on them, causing injuries, smashing glasses and lacerating arms with broken pieces of glass. They groped around in the pitch dark and called out to each other.

Kobe is known as a relatively earthquake free, "safe zone", so I was shocked when this unpredicted earthquake of such a great scale occurred. I put my futon around Mrs. Fujiwara, and went with everyone else to Konan Primary School's gymnasium to take shelter.

Most of the people living in our dormitory were young men in their twenties who had graduated from top universities in Japan, passed tough examinations and made it into the Sakura Bank workforce. To further international relations, I and other exchange students like me were also asking to live in the dormitory.

I asked everyone why it had taken such a long time for them to come down to the first floor after the earthquake. One person said that he "thought the building was still strong". Another said, "When I was a child, I was taught that when an earthquake strikes you should keep calm, don't act too quickly or rashly and get under a bed or strong table." There were, of course, people who searched, sleepy-eyed for their glasses, and thought the sirens outside were their alarm clocks going off. There were also people whose way out was blocked by chairs and tables and just didn't know what to do.

Dawn broke. People seemed slightly more at ease. The ground at my feet was cracked and uneven, a car had been flattened by a fallen wall, and large buildings and single storied homes had also collapsed. The train lines had also suffered large amounts of damage. One pond in front of the station had lost half its water and twenty or more fish were jostling one another for room, while in another pond all the water had run out and several fish were lying belly-up.

In front of all the telephone boxes were long lines of ten or more people. I went and waited in the shortest line in front of the International Phone Box. At last it was my turn. I tried to put my card in but the phone wouldn't accept it. A Japanese man standing behind me said there was no

power so only coins could be used. But I didn't have any. Someone kindly exchanged my telephone card for some coins. I got back into line again, and when it finally came round to my turn again the phone was completely filled with coins so I couldn't use it.

*** Calling my Father in Beijing**

Taking advantage of a break between aftershocks I made my way back to the dormitory. The inside of my room had changed completely; it looked as though someone had changed the positions of everything in the room. A desk which had been up against a wall was in the center of the room; the television had moved from the south-west corner to the north-east corner of the room; all my books were in a huge heap and it took about thirty minutes before I found my false teeth.

I pulled the telephone out from a pile of waste paper. Luckily it wasn't broken and the line was still working. I was very surprised and happy! In a calm tone of voice I called my father in Beijing, told him the news of the earthquake, and then phoned four of my professors in Chuo ward, Kita ward, Nishi ward, and Osaka. Luckily all four of them were safe. However, Higashi-Nada ward, where I was living had the highest number of casualties of any district in Kobe. Both the one storied and two storied houses on the northern side of our dormitory had been reduced to rubble.

For the Japanese, the company is almost as important as their own homes, and many people were making their way to their companies to see what kind of state they were in. Other people made their way back to evacuation centres and were searching for people, or trying to rescue those who were trapped. Earthquake victims who had rescued their families were able to provide relatively accurate information so rescue operations were able to continue smoothly. People who were trapped deep inside destroyed buildings took an excessively long time to be rescued.

*** Thinking about my son back home**

We cut through the window frames, broke down the door, got the furniture out of the way, made our way into the building, and at last were able to pull a boy out of the wreckage. Both of the boy's legs were swollen and purple. Next, we pulled the boy's mother from the rubble. She couldn't speak and had both arms folded stiffly across her chest. We brought out some futons and wrapped both the mother and child in them. A car came but we could only fit one person in it. We put the boy in the car and the mother on a table which we carried, and then made our way to the hospital. On the way, many houses had collapsed, blocking roads and forcing us to make detours. Carrying the mother, we finally made it to the hospital, but the line of injured people lying on tatami mats stretched out onto the road. A doctor examined the mother and child and, judging that they had only minor injuries gave them some medicine for the time being and told them to come back again that evening for treatment.

We decided we had no choice but to take them back to the dormitory and look after them ourselves.

Out of the nearly one hundred people in the dormitory only Fujiwara-san suffered severe injuries. Supporting Kosugi-san we went to visit Fujiwara-san at the hospital. On the way we spotted a rescue team member rescuing someone from the fourth floor of an eight storey match-box like building which was covered in cracks. Rescuing people from narrow crevices is extremely difficult work, and day after day all the news services were focusing heavily on these sort of scenes. The hospital that Fujiwara-san was in looked just like a water torture room; the earthquake had caused the water-pipes to burst. Fujiwara-san was lying quietly in a second floor room with a large icepack on her face to bring down the swelling.

"Who do you worry about most at this sort of time?" I asked Kosugi-san.

"I'm only thinking of how to protect myself," she replied.

"Well, what about your son?"

"Men can look after themselves", she said.

But all I could think of was my son in Beijing.

It has been ten years since he was born, and for the first five years I was too busy with my work to be able to be with him, and the last five years I've spent in Japan, without going back once. I've always felt sorry for that, but I don't plan to try and make excuses for what I did. I sent him a short letter.

"Ten-chan, there has been a big earthquake in Kobe. I think about you often. I love you. Take care of yourself, be strong and be determined."

From your Father in Japan

At that time everything seemed to be in a state of paralysis, and I know that my letter would probably not be sent. But I posted it anyway. I don't think about my eventual death. But I can't rid myself of the thought that I will someday die. So I wrote this letter and prayed that it would not become my last testament.

As night fell the fear began to mount. The residents of the dormitory didn't have the courage to return to its empty blackness, so they returned to the Konan Primary School where the buildings were quite new and strong, and relatively safe. The leader of the refuge area told us to go to the third floor. If the building began to subside or cave-in then the third floor would be the safest, but the first floor could possibly sink into the ground.

We thought that outside the earthquake epicentre, there hadn't been much destruction. The school buildings were strong and the hall on the south side faced onto a playing field so if anything did happen we could make an easy escape. We left the door open when we went to sleep. We all jokingly said, "Our lives are precious, but we'd rather freeze to death than die in an earthquake." People who had cars slept inside them.

Inside, the hall was lively. Generally, Japanese people seem to be introverted and quiet, and even if they do group together, they don't become noisy like Chinese people. But, in this sort of emergency situation, changes could be seen in people; strangers greeting each other, people sharing food, and even a sense of optimism and brightness greater than usual.

But when will the Kobe earthquake breathe its last? During the day, the people were busy and didn't feel the aftershocks, but at night when aftershocks struck, everyone woke and gathered in the hall. It's like in the old story where Jack cried, "Wolf!" too often. People shout "Earthquake!" so often that it gets on your nerves. People have stopped taking notice of the small aftershocks now.

*** The Chinese women who died just before meeting her husband again**

A rather brave bank employee returned to the dormitory, which had electricity but no water. Many other bank employees also made the long walk to their places of employment to get ready for reopening. However, the dormitory cooks and I remained at the evacuation center. To tell the truth, the earthquake was affecting my plans for writing my graduate thesis. But apart from that, experiencing this huge earthquake, and witnessing Japanese society in a time of emergency has been an important experience for me.

I won't be able to forget the Chinese exchange students who died in the earthquake. One of those students was Wei Hong-san, a woman who translated for the Emperor and Empress when they visited China; and in October of last year entered the Osaka University graduate programme majoring in Economics. She was invited to Japan by the Japan-China Friendship Organization and lived in the Organization's lodging. Unfortunately, in the earthquake her lodgings completely collapsed, and her body was later found in the mountain of rubble. Her husband, whom she had married just before coming to Japan, was due to arrive on January 19th, but unfortunately the earthquake struck at dawn on the January 17.

Looking Back on The Great Hanshin Earthquake

-Accounts of Someone in Charge of Foreign Students

Masami Shiokawa (f)JAPAN

Kobe Design University

International Exchanges

(Translated by Welody Ivonne Tan)

It was the 17th of January and I was staying over at a friend's place for the long weekend, when suddenly I was jolted violently from my sleep.

It was pitch black due to a power failure and the icy night wind blew mercilessly as I fumbled for a transistor radio, intending to get information about what was going On. It seemed that there had been an earthquake. After a while the electricity supply was restored and I was able to switch on the television set. However, at that time it was still not possible for the television stations to give an accurate account of the damage caused by the quake. As I do not know how to drive, and have always relied on public transportation, I recognized that I wouldn't be able to commute to work that day. I tried to contact my university, but due to the earthquake, my friend's phone seemed to be out of order. I called from a public phone booth which, fortunately, was functioning. I was told that those who had managed to turn up for work were busy clearing up the place because many things had fallen; the earthquake had successfully left a fine mess in it's trail.

After some time, the news stations began to broadcast more accurate details regarding the extent of damage caused by the earthquake. Everywhere was a state of emergency, and phone lines were apparently down in most places. According to the news, traffic had not been temporarily halted, however most of the roads were completely destroyed. I was concerned about the foreign students, but as the phones were out of order and as I had no means of transportation it was impossible for me to do anything. The only thing left was for me to use the public phones, which I did. Even so, it depended on luck as to whether one would be connected or not, as I found out for myself after waiting in line for several hours. When I called my answering machine at home, I found messages left by several students concerning their whereabouts and their contact phone numbers. However because of my situation, I was unable to make contact with them from my side.

On the fourth day after the quake, I returned to work at my university. I was in charge of confirming whether the students, both Japanese and Foreign, were safe.

I paid more attention to the foreign students. Fortunately, there had been no reports of death or injury. However, I was compelled to get in touch with each and everyone of them, just to be absolutely certain. As Head of the International Exchanges, intending to confirm the whereabouts of the foreign students, I set out to contact all of them directly. That alone took me two weeks. At last I was satisfied and felt relieved because, although some of them had either returned to their country or were seeking shelter with their friends, they were all in good health. However I was still worried about the future of those foreign students whose houses had collapsed or been damaged, and also those who were planning to enter the university the next semester.

Even under normal circumstances (?) it was quite difficult for foreign students to find housing. I wonder about the problems they are encountering now, as there are not many houses left standing in Kobe. I realized that the other universities would also be experiencing such difficulties. Therefore, I took it upon myself to ask the Universities and also JAFSA (Japan Association for Foreign Student Affairs) to make a questionnaire regarding this. We had planned to send out the results to the media and the board of administration, hoping that they would assist us in preparing

a housing policy especially for foreign students. However, most of the feedback we got from the questionnaire was from the students living in areas only slightly affected by the quake. Unfortunately, because of this, the questionnaire didn't have the required appeal to get the attention it needed.

On the other hand, we had also been busy contacting Japanese families who had been involved in cultural exchanges with some of the foreign students, to see if they were willing to provide accomodation to such homeless students. Fortunately, through this, two of our foreign students managed to receive help.

After the quake, the Ministry of Education gave some money through the Association of International Education (Japan) to the foreign students who could not continue living in their apartments. We appreciate this, but for those students who were greatly affected by the quake, this was just a consolation, something "better than nothing". However, the Ministry of Education rejected the application of foreign students who returned to their respective countries, stating that such students did not fulfil the necessary requirements. For those of us taking care of the foreign students, this conclusion was difficult to understand. Did they consider the students who went back to their home countries as 'having more than enough money' or that they were 'simply not interested in continuing their studies in Japan'? Even the Japanese students fled Kobe, as they were scared of the unceasing aftershocks.

Anybody who, at that time, had the chance to leave Kobe and stay elsewhere until the supply of electricity, water and gas was completely restored, left. Just as the Japanese students ran back to the safe arms of their waiting parents, I don't see anything unusual with foreign students doing the same thing. At that time, there wasn't even enough water to cook the instant food provided. Even if water could be found, gas would have been another problem. Even portable gas stoves were sold out. Nobody in his or her right mind would willingly stay given the choice. On top of that, as there was a limit to the food that was rationed, in the beginning, many were adamantly demanding their share. Consider the state of mind of the foreign students at that point in time. We hope to get the understanding of the Ministry of Education regarding this matter. Even I, as a Japanese, was pushed and shoved at the supermarket by a crowd of people who were willing to do anything just to get their hands on some food. Was it such a sin for the foreign students to seek refuge in their home countries, until life returned to normal or even slightly improved in Kobe?

Some graduate students who were tutors to foreign students, spent almost four hours carrying supplies from Kyoto. Several Japanese students gave shelter to foreign students, while other tutors went out to search for foreign students who were taking refuge at shelters, despite the fact that some of them had lost their own homes in the earthquake. This was a huge help to me, especially as I myself was immobilized.

As a person in charge of foreign students, and also as a human being, there are limits as to what I can do physically and financially. An emergency such as this earthquake had forced me to understand the importance of human relationships. It matters not if the person is Japanese or foreign, but that both work together to overcome the problems.

Even now, as I look back on the earthquake, I try to ask myself what I more I could have done, but I still haven't found the answer. The disaster is not yet over. Almost all the foreign students lost their part time jobs. Most affordable housing has collapsed. Some of their guarantors suffered too. Discussion on financial aid, and scholarships for earthquake victims have been held the work continues.

Although I was not able to move around immediately after the quake, and the only thing that I

could do then was pray for the safety of the students, now, I hope that I can help these foreign students recover and return to the lifestyles they enjoyed before the earthquake.

The days following the earthquake

SHOJI, Yuko (♀) JAPAN

Kobe University

(Translated by Kirsty McCann)

At the time of the earthquake I was in my house in Kakogawa, located west of Akashi. It was a while before I realised what the shaking was, as I had never experienced an earth tremor before. After the vibrations stopped I left my room, scattered with books and debris, to turn on the TV (which had also fallen off its stand). I tuned into a news broadcast, from which I learned nothing but the already known fact that there had been an earthquake - as to the magnitude, or the degree of damage that had occurred, I had no idea. On attempting to phone the university, I discovered the lines into Kobe wouldn't connect - there was no way I could contact my friends.

I walked to the station, where I learned from the announcements that considerable damage within the Kobe region had occurred, and the trains weren't running due to fallen overbridges and displaced tracks. I returned home to find an unceasing display of images on my TV, showing the chaos and destruction created by the earthquake. I couldn't believe this was the Kobe I knew so well! Who would have thought that an earthquake of this scale would occur in the Kansai region - where even the slightest of tremors were so rare. As time passed, the death toll refused to plateau, increasing constantly. I repeatedly tried to call into Kobe, but it was impossible to get a line - all I could do was pray for the survival of my friends. Eventually, that evening I made contact with someone from my research room at university, and to my relief learnt that all my classmates were safe - including the three foreign students. A was living in a residence on Port Island, B was renting an apartment with his family in Okurayama, and C in a dormitory in Motoyama-minamicho. I was relieved to discover they were all without injury, and taking refuge.

However, I was not satisfied at having confirmed everyone's safety by telephone - I wanted to somehow go and see for myself. There was no possible route into Kobe via train, so on the evening of the 18th January, I loaded my car with food supplies and water, and approached university from the north. As I drove, I noticed the bright neon lights of Kobe had been replaced by a blackness, penetrated only occasionally by pricks of light.

Fortunately, those sheltering at university were not hurt, and in high spirits. A's residence was without damage. B's apartment was partially mined, but his wife and baby had escaped without injury. C's dormitory was OK, but most of the surrounding houses had apparently been destroyed, and he had helped to rescue the survivors. The three of them remained at the refugee shelter, as they were afraid of aftershocks and believed the centre to be relatively safe.

Due to the prolonged termination of gas and water supplies, chaos on the roads and the continuous occurrence of aftershocks, C was ordered to return home. A also returned home due to the difficulty faced in continuing his research, and the anxiety suffered by his family. I continuously sent any new information to these students, but I secretly wondered if they would ever return.

Now, as the buds upon the cherry blossom trees swell and burst into flower, those who temporarily returned home have now come back to Japan. During their absence, relief organizations have been working hard to restore the kind of lifestyle that the victims were previously able to enjoy. Looking back, I find it hard to believe that only three months have passed since the earthquake -

it feels so much longer.

Although it was a very difficult and confusing period for us Japanese, I believe for those foreign students who were unable to understand any information (broadcasted in Japanese), and who had few Japanese friends, it was also a time during which they had to depend on help from their fellow students. I hope we were able to adequately meet with their expectations. In the future, many more problems are sure to arise, whether they be due to the earthquake, or other unforeseen events. I hope that in these times of need, the students of Kobe University will be able to stand by and help each other.

Finally, I would like to pray for the eternal rest of the souls of our classmates who lost their lives in the earthquake.

Verily, with every difficulty there is relief

Sudaryanto (m) INDONESIA
Kobe University
(Translated by Welody Ivonne Tan)

"Verily, with every difficulty there is relief" (No.94, Verse 6)

The Great Hanshin Earthquake (17th January, 1995) was the biggest disaster I have ever experienced

in my life - so much so that it has carved a permanent place in my memory. The foregoing Islamic verse was the source of comfort, if not encouragement, that held my family and I throughout that period. To describe the incident with mere words will not do it justice. However, for memory's sake, I will hereby try to give an account of what my family and I went through.

My wife and I returned home from Tokyo at around 10pm on the night of the 16th. Exhausted as we were, we immediately sank into a deep slumber. Although not yet completely recovered from our fatigue, we woke at around 5:30am the next day for our morning prayers. I went to wash my hands and feet (in preparation for the prayers) in the bathroom, whilst my wife washed herself at the kitchen sink. All of a sudden I felt a very strong vibration followed by an extremely violent shake - almost the same kind of sensation one gets in a train as it takes a turn. I thought that a huge truck from the Meishin Expressway right behind our apartment building had rammed into us. Unable to stand up, I crouched down, holding onto the bathtub. I found myself soaking wet when a piece of wall broke off and fell into the bathtub spraying water everywhere. At that point, I was still not fully aware of what had actually happened. My wife ran over to the bathroom, shouting out for me. When I was finally able to get up on my feet, I found her in pain, pinned by the jammed bathroom door. I immediately pulled her into the bathroom, as I thought it the safest place to be at the time.

Upon realizing that 'it' was actually an earthquake, we dashed out of our room. A few of our neighbours had already gathered outside, and the crowd kept getting bigger. I looked up at my room on the second floor of the three storey building, forgetting about the bitter cold due to my bathtub water-drenched clothes. The back wall of the building had fallen onto a carpark, crushing what used to be cars, under it.

Fortunately one of our neighbours who had brought along a radio tuned into the news at full blast. It seemed that the quake occurred 5:46am, and that our place wasn't the only area affected.

When daylight broke, we returned to our room to get our valuables and whatever food we could find. After that we queued up at a public phone in order to contact our fellow Indonesian friends living in Kobe.

That night, we (my wife, Nor Hidayanti, a friend from Indonesia and I) stayed over at a place introduced by our landlord, which happened to be close to ours. We tried to convince ourselves that the house we were in was safe, but echoing visions of the quake kept haunting us.

That was how we passed the first day. Two days later, leaving my wife at a friend's place in Kyoto, I headed for Kobe from Amagasaki by bicycle. With a supply of food and water, I set off for the mosque because I heard that there were people seeking shelter there. Next, I went to Kobe

University International Residence on Port Island to check on my friends. Finally, I went to the Indonesian Consulate in Mikage where many Indonesians were seeking refuge. What I saw throughout my eight-hour bike trip was a dead city. Looking at the fallen buildings and expressways, I came to realize the strength of nature and the power of the creator.

After my wife had spent four days in Kyoto whilst I did relief work in Kobe, I decided that it would be best if we both stayed at Port Island, despite the fact that the supply of water and gas had still not been restored. There were only fifteen students still living there at the time. The rest had either gone back home or elsewhere to seek shelter. We chose the residence after considering my studies. Also, I thought that as a foreign student it would be better to seek shelter there as opposed to staying with friends and the like. Because of that, I found myself collecting water and cycling to school (an hour away) each day.

That was the path we took after the earthquake. The room that had been our new home since my wife came to Japan on the 21st of December, 1994, was completely destroyed. However, life is more precious than material things. I feel extremely lucky because most of my possessions were OK, and also I did not have to seek shelter in tents like many of the Japanese people did.

It was not because of time or money that we decided not to go home, but instead, my work in Japan. I had to prepare for a presentation on the 27th of March and also complete my paper. Also, I wanted to observe the Japanese people and their governments' reaction to the circumstances. In times of trouble and lack of food, such as these, would disorder and riot disrupt the Japanese community? What would be the best steps to rebuild a city? The answers to my many questions could only be obtained by remaining in Japan.

Amongst the things that caught my attention was the Japanese phrase "shikatanai" which literally translates to, "It can't be helped". Though these words were often uttered, instead of giving up, the Japanese people kept looking for other alternatives. In Islam, this kind of behaviour is called "Tawakal". Together with advanced technology, this has helped speed up the rebuilding of Kobe. Also, behaviour like this helps me, as a muslim, to strive and not lose hope. "Tawakal" also means that one should accept the facts with faith as there will be goodness in store. The following Quranic verse is also often in my thoughts:

"Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To God we belong and to Him is our return."

They are those on whom (descend) blessings from God, and mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance." (No 2, verse 155-157)

Since after the quake, I have found that the Japanese people prefer to believe in "unmei" (fate). It's sad that very few stop to think deeper into the meaning of it (unmei). There are too many such stories to tell.

Above is an account of what I went through. Because I experienced, I have memories. When I return to my country, I will take these experiences as "souvenirs".

Finally, I would like to extend my condolences to those who have been victims of the quake and wish them well. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to those of you who have generously helped us through these times.

Our one and only thing which we can do

Shihoko Takao (f)JAPAN
Kobe Design University
(Translated by Welody Ivonne Tan)

I only realized how terrible the earthquake had been after I switched on the TV when the electricity was restored at almost 10 am. I was shocked at what I saw. The truth is, during those twenty seconds of the quake, I wasn't really aware of what was happening around me. After the sun came up, I no longer worried. The only thing that was on my mind was whether or not I had to go to school. I stayed glued to the television set until my phone rang. It was from a friend of mine, a Miss Kan from Korea. She had been on a ski tour with a group of Koreans and was on her way home, along the highway near Nada ward when the earthquake struck. Escaping death by the skin of her teeth, she walked home after being pulled to safety. She called me because she was scared. However, I was happy to hear that she was safe and well.

As her apartment was severely damaged by the quake, she had to stay at my place until she could find new accommodation. A week later she moved in with one of her friends who was staying alone. When she first came to my place, she was dressed only in her pajamas, carrying with her a bag containing only bare necessities. Although she was not injured, I could see that she had been badly shaken by the incident.

Amongst the foreign students affected by the quake, my friend could be considered as one of the luckier ones. She has already bought the things she needs, has shifted into a new apartment and was even able to salvage many things from her old place.

However, not all the foreign students were blessed with such luck. Most students do not have relatives or many friends in Japan. We were preoccupied with our own problems, so there was nowhere for them to turn to for help. For those who wished to return to their home countries, there was no means of transportation available at the time. Maybe the foreign students experienced more psychological damage due to the quake than the normal Japanese, although I can't tell what really happened to them because I didn't meet others - only Miss Kan. But the one thing I can say is, "We are lucky to be alive, and I believe that there must be at least something that each and everyone of us can and must do."

I worked as a temporary volunteer at Akashi. It was not as badly hit as Kobe but there were many people at the shelter. There it did not matter if you were a Japanese or a foreigner; both had the same rights. I believe that the foreign students should fight with, and work alongside us Japanese to overcome the many problems.

The Ties of Friendship

Thin Aye Aye Ko (m) MYANMAR
Kobe University
(Translated by Thin Aye Aye Ko)

I see bad dreams every day. They are very bitter, mournful, and I can't control my mind anymore. I think again and again as to what is the cause. It grieves me to think of it. I can't stand it anymore and I want to get rid of these bad dreams. With this intention, I decided to give vent to my feelings through this essay, to write down everything. This essay is not only to describe my sorrowful memories, but is also to express my deep sympathy for those many people who lost their relatives and friends. By writing this essay, I hope to find direction in my life and be encouraged.

I am a student from Myanmar, a less developed country. I have a dream to construct a bridge between my country and Japan, which has achieved the status of an economic power. While I was going to Japanese Language school, I stayed with a Japanese family and hence my Japanese proficiency progressed day by day. But, after a span of a year, I grew homesick and used to cry in my room every night. I attempted too much to have difficult Japanese talks which put a lot of mental pressure on me. To get rid of this stress, I was dying to meet with Myanmar people. I wanted to talk about Myanmar, and eat my country's food together. At that time, I was accepted into Kobe University as a research student, and I became acquainted with Ms Aye in the same faculty. After that, my daily life in Japan became more meaningful. Later, when I decided to support myself and start a new life, Aye introduced me to a part-time job. It was there that I came to know two more fellow Myanmar friends, Ms Khin and Ms Lwin. All of them were older than me; they were like my sisters.

My first job was as a cashier, which was very difficult. One has to get used to the machine, as it is very complicated. At that time, one of my friends used to help me. As a hobby, I grew bitter melon (a kind of a vegetable; most Myanmar people like them very much) plants and when they grew big, I gave them to my three friends. One day, Khin told me that she too grew many bitter melon plants and that she would give me her plants when they grew big.

I was hungry and I had a headache due to my hard study schedule. No matter whether it rains, or if my legs are frozen in winter, I must go to my job. On my way to the job, I used to drop in to my friends' house which was situated in Higashi Nada ward. When I needed something, or when I was teased by someone, or when I used to have troubles, my friends helped me as my sisters. After coming to Japan, I lost ten kilograms, however because of the courtesy extended to me by my new friends, I managed to recover my lost weight.

Living in a foreign country, I realise that I must strive hard no matter what happens, and I was prepared for this. But there are some problems that I can not sort out by myself. At that time, I thought that we fellow countryman can help each other and so I set my mind at ease. When I came to know that my friends were vigorously struggling against bitter life, I began to admire them.

From December 1994, I stopped my job to prepare for the Master Course entrance examination. While I studied hard for the examination, I used to think of organising a party in my room on

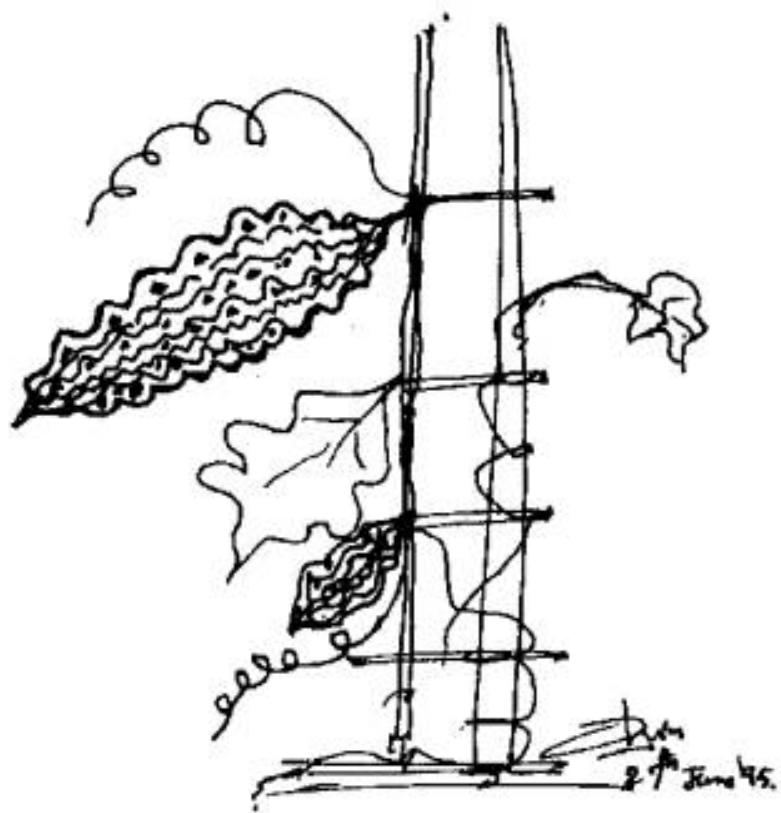
completion of the examination. At that time I thought that our separation was only for a short time, however, unfortunately it was forever.

On January 17, 1995, the Great Hanshin Earthquake occurred. Fortunately my dormitory was safe, but I was worried for two days as the water and gas supply was disrupted. My savings were also running out. During those two days, I tried to contact my friends again and again, but I could not get through. Every night I used to see bad dreams. In my dreams, Khin said to me many times "Let's meet at work" and Lwin with a cheerful look said "Tell me if you need anything, and I'll give it to you." That dream was at 6:00am on January 20. In the middle of the dream a telephone call awoke me, bringing me news about my friends' sad bereavement. At that moment, I got a shock and even forgot to cry. I wanted it all to be a lie. I wanted to cry out but was afraid of whether I had lost all three of my friends. According to my teacher's information, one person was confirmed dead, one person was hospitalised, while the other's whereabouts was unknown. There was no information on what had happened to whom. As for me, there was nothing to do but cry when I knew that I was not able to help them. I had a bitter time. Most of the items that I was using in my day to day life were from Lwin, and on seeing them I used to get sad. Since I could not control my feelings anymore, I requested a Japanese person (who has been supporting me since) and found the hospital where my friend was kept. In the late night, I travelled by car for ten hours from Amagasaki to Kakogawa. All over, I thought about my friends without eating and sleeping. I thought "What a turn of Fortune's wheel! How pitiable it is to die in a foreign country." I thought that at least I should do something for my friends. I met Aye at Kakogawa hospital. Aye had stitches on her forehead and had a fracture in her right hand. She told me in a feeble voice before the operation on her hand "There was a message that the other two have died. Khin died on the spot, but Lwin was shouting for help when I was there." She continued saying that she had no tears left to cry. But I saw that her eyes were full of tears. I was overwhelmed with grief and could not utter a single word.

The next day I brought flowers and water to their mansion in Higashi Nada ward which was destroyed by the earthquake. It was a big seven-storey building with its ground floor buried in the earth. I offered the flowers and water; it was raining and I could see Khin's bitter melon plants. I cried a lot and prayed in the Myanmar way again and again. I can not forget this particular incident throughout my life.

Khin and Lwin had been in Japan over two years, but they had no chance to go back home in the holidays. Khin's mother had been waiting for her lovely only daughter. Her mother, who was hoping to live with her daughter together, could not tolerate her death and is still suffering from mental shock. When I met Khin's elder brother at the memorial service ceremony at Kobe University. He said "I have lost my sister, but I want to believe that she is still alive. So, Ms Aye Ko, please be my sister. Let me think of you as my sister."

Due to the Hanshin Earthquake, I lost two of my beloved friends. It is hard to stay in Kobe where the memories of them are still alive. I want to flee somewhere. But I have to fulfill my duties towards my friends and work hard towards it.



The Japanese spirit as seen from a refugee centre

Wang He Yao (f) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Kirsty McCann)

The 17th January, 1995, saw the occurrence of an earthquake which created an unbelievable degree of damage and destruction. This 'Great Hanshin Earthquake' claimed over 5400 innocent lives, and injured countless others. Hundreds of thousands lost their homes, and were forced to gather together in nearby schools and churches that were serving as refugee centres. Although three months have now passed since the disaster, there are still fifty to sixty thousand people living in shelters. However, as I pass through these centres, I am surprised to discover a prevailing sense of group unity, harmony, and co-operation, and I feel that the Japanese are a truly amazing race.

Most people take great pains to avoid causing any annoyance or trouble to their neighbour. Any goods received from relief organizations, ranging from meager amounts of food to supplies of rugs, are peacefully divided up into even amounts. Everyone is spontaneous in their actions, efficiently maintaining all aspects of their communal lifestyle, including hygiene and safety. They help one another in the spirit similar to that of a family. Volunteers are also to be seen in abundance, doing various things and generally giving support.

As a result of this earthquake, I have realised the importance of the Japanese sense of values - their diligence and kindness have made me see that science is not the only thing I have come here to study. From now on, I intend to immerse myself in the Japanese society, and learn about the people that make this country what it is.

Aftershocks

Alexander A Tokmakov (m) RUSSIA
Kobe University
(Translated by Alexander A Tokmakov)

Before the Great Hanshin Earthquake I had never experienced any earthquakes. News reports and newspaper descriptions were very different from my actual experience.

Fortunately, the place where I lived (Gakuentoshi) was not at the very center of the disaster, so no people died and practically no buildings were destroyed. Of course, the lack of gas and water, food shortage and traffic problems didn't add to my peace of mind. However, these were only temporary inconveniences. I felt lucky to be safe and sound. All my friends and compatriots were OK too. I couldn't say that I was oppressed very much or had suffered badly. I left for Kyushu for about three weeks. By the time I came back, everything in the dormitory had been fixed, traffic was partially restored and life seemed to be normal. So I thought that for me it was all over without any serious consequences.

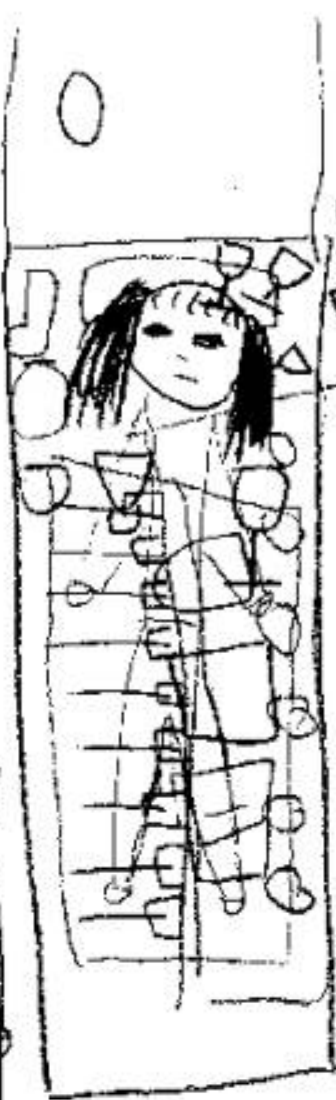
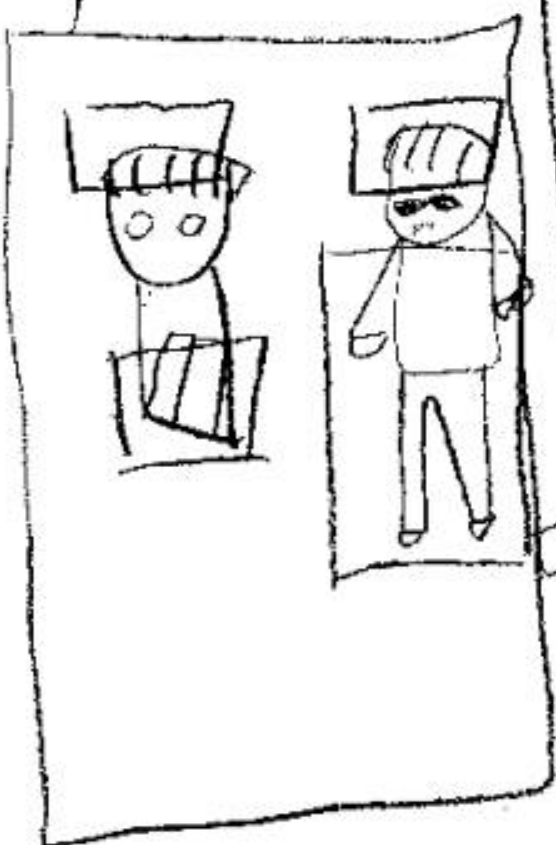
But it wasn't over yet.

As you know, there were many aftershocks over the next two months. Nothing serious, but everytime I felt fear to the extent which I had never felt up until the time of the Great Hanshin Earthquake. The feeling that you could do nothing but wait. Wait for what? Maybe in a minute it would be another dreadful disaster with everything completely collapsed. These buildings and roads and even mountains which once seemed so firm and fast, are actually vulnerable and can not survive a huge catastrophe, let alone protect us. With all the high technology and advanced science, space shuttles, nuclear stations and supercomputers, man is still so weak and defecess. I hadn't felt like this before the Great Hahshin Earthquake.

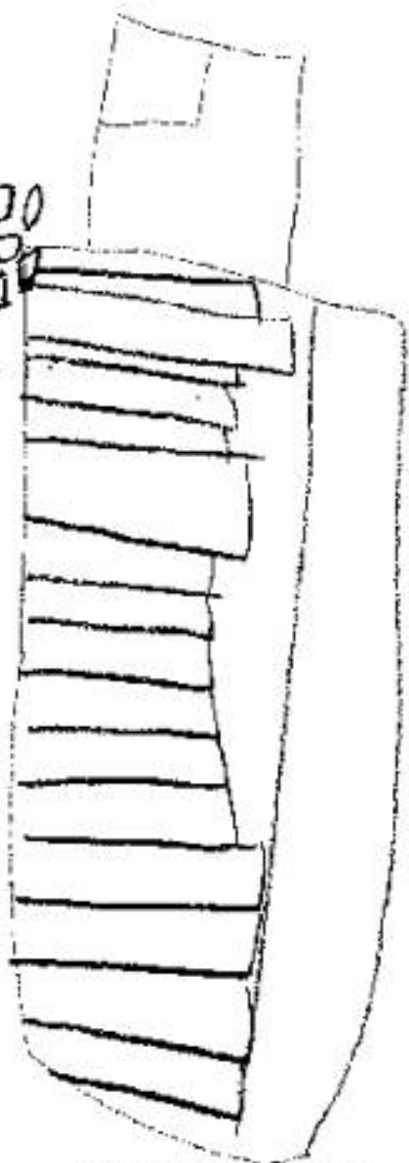
Sometimes at night I wake up with an unpleasant, even panicky feeling that everything around me is moving and shaking, which leads me to believe that one more dreadful earthquake is coming. So then I can not fall asleep again, waiting - what's next? Nothing, but my own pulse in my ears.

They say time heals. I hope I will get over this sometime. But I don't know when...

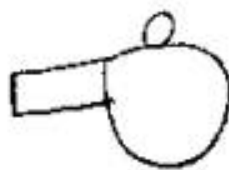
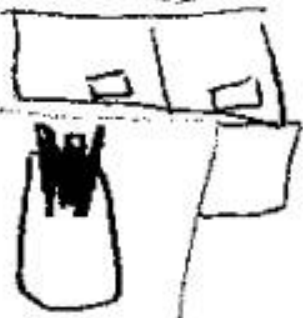
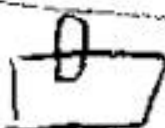
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My Earthquake Experience

Wang Li Bin (M) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Scan Ellwood)

It's been three months since the Great Hanshin Earthquake, but the effects of it are still deeply visible. My family lives in an old housing estate in the middle of Hyogo-ku, Kobe City. On the morning of January 17 I was fast asleep when all of a sudden I was woken by an incredible shaking. "Earthquake!"; I sat up straight away.

I was born in the earthquake prone Chinese province of He Bei, I experienced both the 1965 Xing Tai earthquake (M7.4) and the 1976 Tang Shah earthquake (M7.8), but neither of them was as scary as the earthquake in Kobe. When the earthquake struck I didn't have time to think. I immediately used my body to protect my wife and child. "It's alright, it's already over", I said, to comfort them, but I was terrified myself. "It's the end of the world!" I thought in despair. The shaking lasted a long time. Around us it was pitch black, things were falling down, dust was getting in my nose; I couldn't do anything except wait for the roof to fall down. The shaking soon stopped. All around us had fallen into a fearful stillness. "We're safe! Let's get out of here!" I shouted, grabbed some clothes in a rush and left the room. A stairway on the way down had been blocked off by a collapsed wall; we couldn't get out. I cleared the wall out of the way, and along with my family made our way to a piece of open ground. We felt somewhat relieved.

After that, I sat with my family until dawn, when we could see the terrible condition which our housing estate was in. We couldn't return to our home, so around 11AM we made our way to a local elementary school and took refuge there. Watching a television in the evacuation center we realised just how much damage had been caused in Kobe City. I was worried about the safety of my professor and friends, and tried to telephone them but couldn't get through.

But my first worry was my wife, who had fallen ill and developed a high temperature. At that time all the hospitals were filled to overflowing with earthquake wounded. Doctors, medicine, and hospital rooms were in short supply and I couldn't get treatment for my wife. The food we received from the evacuation center was all cold, and she couldn't eat it. I was wondering what to do. My wife's illness caused me to panic, she became worse, and on the third day she lost consciousness when she went to the toilet. Luckily, someone who was living at the same evacuation center helped us. Not only did he give my wife some of his own medicine, he also cooked some hot food for her too. Thanks to the help of this person my wife's condition gradually got better. Just to be on the safe side I took my wife and family back to China a week later. I myself decided that I would continue my research, and remain in Kobe to help those who had been affected by the earthquake. I moved from the evacuation center to my laboratory. In my laboratory I continued my research which I had been doing up until the earthquake and also worked as a volunteer doing relief work.

Shortly after the earthquake safety information for personnel was very important, so I used the information laboratory, with my professor's guidance to provide information for Chinese students living in the Kobe area on safety, living, financial aid etc. on the computerised E-mail network. We also started a new service in connection with our exchange student friends and the Hyogo Prefectural Japan-China Friendship Society; called the Chinese Exchange Students' Cultural Center. At this center we have confirmed that over 500 Chinese exchange students are safe and well, and we have passed that information on to the Japanese and Chinese governments and the families and

friends of the exchange students. Also we have received two million yen and lots of disaster relief supplies which have all been given to exchange students in need. At the same time we have provided housing information. Because of these relief efforts, the Japanese have developed an interest in Chinese exchange students; and those student's volunteer efforts have left a deep impression on the Japanese people. Without the help of the government and people of Japan exchange students affected by this disaster would find it impossible to rebuild their lives here.

I have been in Kobe since the earthquake, and I have many thoughts and impressions of the earthquake, but the ones that are the most important are the the way the Japanese people displayed their excellence as a nation and their ability to endure hardships. The people of Kobe didn't panic, lose hope or show fear, they endured and would not be beaten.

After a short two months most of the lifelines of the city have been restored. The great power of the Japanese people will, in the near future, allow a new Kobe to stand up before the world once again.

As an exchange student I have, through this earthquake, learnt many things I would otherwise not have been able to. My studies have gone as planned, but because of the earthquake and taking part in volunteer work I am quite backward in my studies. I will continue to work hard to overcome this earthquake.

The return of Kobe's Charm

Wang Wen Jie (m) CHINA
Kyoto University of Education
(Translated by Kirsty McCann)

Nestled between mountain and sea, the beautiful city of Kobe is often recognized for its international community. Many students leave their home towns, separating themselves from their country of origin, and travel the long distance to start a new life in Kobe, which most of them grow to love.

I am from one of the sister cities of Kobe (Tian Jing, China), so I feel a particular attachment to this port town. After experiencing a year of living here as a foreign student, I have become used to the Japanese way of life.

Before I left my country, I was told many things about Japan, including the fact that earthquakes are known to occur frequently. But I was relieved to hear that Kobe, "Heaven's door", was an area renowned to experience little movement. However, on the 17th January, this belief was proved incorrect, surprising many people. Fortunately I escaped injury, and my apartment withstood the shaking, but my room was a mess.

In order to call my family to tell them I was OK, I went to make use of the free phone calls at the City Office. There, I met up with a fellow student, Li, with whom I spoke as we walked. "This earthquake reminded me of the one that occurred during my primary school days in China; the Tang Shan earthquake. It is recognized to have been the most lethal in all of history, killing hundreds of thousands of people. The Kobe earthquake was pretty bad, too."

As we walked, we reached the overpass in Sannomiya city. Looking around, we saw that the top layers of most buildings had collapsed.

"Kobe will most certainly have to be rebuilt. We will probably have graduated and be back in China before everything returns to normal", she sadly observed.

On hearing this, my heart filled with sorrow. We foreign students must also strive to contribute towards the effort of restructuring the city of Kobe. We must try to forget those few brief moments of shock and confusion. We must regain our confidence as we labour to bring the charm back to Kobe.

Determined to survive

Wang Ya Qin (f) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Hannah Lee)

On January 17, 1995, when most people were still sound asleep and dreaming, the Great Hanshin Earthquake occurred in the Kobe area. The heavens and earth both shook violently, and the noise of the shaking reverberated through the air. There was no time for response to the situation, in which all people living in the Hanshin area (the area between Kobe and Osaka) met with disaster and misfortune. It was indeed very frightening that such a short moment could decide the fate of whether one was destined to live or to die.

My family and I who had been living far from home in Japan, were witnessed to this unprecedented earthquake. As if I was dreaming, the room shook violently as the ground started moving as I heard a ferocious noise. Ahhh, it's an earthquake. Kobe, where earthquakes were virtually unheard of, was now being attacked by an earthquake. The first instinct of my husband and I was to protect our child, Rei Rei. Without thinking of what good my body could do, I lay myself over him. At that time I heard the voice of my husband yelling out "It's an earthquake. Grab Rie Rie and let's leave. I'll open the door." I picked him up and held him tight as we left the shaking room. I will never be able to forget what I saw. All around it was pitch black and extremely cold. The electricity, gas and water supply was cut Off. The silence alone was horribly frightening.

Two hours later the night slowly turned into day. It was the first time that we were able to see the miserable state of our house. It was a sorry scene with everything strewn about. Rie Rei woke up and asked me "Mummy, what happened?" I pushed aside the fear I felt in my heart and didn't tell him the truth. I wanted him to go back to sleep for as long as possible, but he kept waking with each aftershock. He became scared and started crying. I didn't know what I could do to soothe him. However, deciding that the best thing to do would be to leave the house, we set out for the university which was close by.

We took a small supply of food, and set off for my research room. The sky was black, filled with ash from the burning fires. I felt the anxiety inside me piling up. At around midday, the electricity was restored and we were able to watch the television news for the first time since the earthquake. To tell the truth, it was at that moment that I realised we had been very lucky to have survived.

Soon after the earthquake, many of the foreign students started making their way up to the university. At the same time as being thankful that they had survived, they grieved for the friends who hadn't been so lucky. We handed out the little food we had brought with us to the students. Many of them had lost their houses. Our apartment was still standing, but only just, and as it was close to the university, we went back to get more food on which we managed to survive on for close to a week. The Japanese Government also handed out rations of food and water, and the Foreign Students Centre supplied us with many helpful commodities. The Ministry of Education also helped by providing those students who had lost their accommodation, with monetary support.

In spite of the damage, I feel that the Great Hanshin Earthquake has given me the opportunity to

make the most out of life and of being a student, and I feel that I must study even harder from now on. I will also endeavour to contribute to the recovery of Kobe with all my heart.

The Great Hanshin Earthquake

Wang-zhi (m) China,
Kobe Gakuin University
(translated by Steven Costmeyer)

The Southern Hyogo-ken Earthquake struck Kobe on the Seventeenth of January 1995, and in a mere twenty seconds of movement, transformed the face of the port city of Kobe dramatically. The frightening memory of the moment the quake hit will always remain in the peoples memory - Not only did this fierce trembling of the earth cause immeasurable large-scale losses in a matter of moments; it also left a deep scar on the hearts of many. From hereonin we are forced to think more seriously about natural disasters and how to cope with them.

What received the most damage in this unexpected earthquake were man-made structures made from modern technology like railroads, expressways and reinforced concrete buildings. While mankind enjoys the comfort and convenience of modern civilisation usually, in times of natural calamities like this we must rethink exactly what ills modern civilisation has brought along with it.

When we look back on the damage wrought by the quake in the Hanshin area , the lack of preparedness for an earthquake is evident. Not only did many living in Kansai have a preconception that an earthquake would not occur in the area - many of the area's seismologists did too. Therefore, when the sudden, unprecedented, urban-centred-quake hit the city, calm and effective measures were not taken, and the situation appeared to be one which no-one could handle. From the scarcity of earthquake-resistant measures in buildings, to the unprepared everyday life of the populace, it is clear that counter-measures in case of a major earthquake were not adequately considered. According to a post-quake survey of citizens, less than ten percent of those questioned had fixed their furniture / breakables so as not to topple in a quake, or set aside supplies (such as food, water and torch) for use in times of emergency. In addition, the government's post-quake aid system was not able to function effectively; the delay in the dispatch of the self-defence forces was probably also a factor in the spread of the damage.

However, the thing that left the greatest impression on me about the experience was the civility and equanimity of the people. Many japanese made their way to the damaged areas after the event and engaged in volunteer activities readily. They also provided invaluable information to foreign residents in stricken areas. So while the quake brought a lot of pain to the people of Kobe, it also brought people closer together by its making more intimate ties between people a necessity.

The Great Hanshin Earthquake caused a lot of damage both economically and psychologically. However, although the damage caused by earthquakes is largely unavoidable, environmental disasters caused by humans are avoidable, and it is a great tragedy that they are occuring all over the world. From now on mankind must develop in harmony with nature, for the environment is a problem not just for the current generation, but for its children and their children's children also.

An experience of the earthquake disaster

Wu Wan Hong (f) CHINA
Kobe University
Li Yan Sheng (m) CHINA
Kobe YWCA
(Translated by Kazuyuki Kiryu)

Preface

This report appeared in the Tianjing News, a newspaper in China on January 28, 1995. It was written while we were back home after the earthquake, for the newspaper company where we used to work, and so is intended for readers in China. Although as a Japanese (English) version you may find some inappropriate angles to it, we would nevertheless like to publish this as it is without any modifications and relays the truth.

Compared to the people who died, we think our experience is nothing, but the Great Hanshin Earthquake was for us the second experience of a great earthquake: the other was the one that took place in Tangshan in 1976, with a seismic intensity of 7.8. Earthquakes are natural disasters which we cannot avoid. But we are keenly aware that no matter how large an earthquake that confronts us may be, we, as human beings, have to have the confidence to overcome it.

We would like to deliver a eulogy to the people who died in the earthquake, and hope that all others will overcome their sadness, and adopt a more positive outlook towards the situation.

One

At 5:46am on January 17, Kobe City, said to be in a "safe" region of Japan, was struck by a strong earthquake with a seismic intensity of 7.2. The International Students Residence on Port Island pitched like a boat at sea. We had been dreaming, but were suddenly terrifyingly pulled back to reality. The thought crossed my mind that we would die in Japan. According to later released reports, the quake lasted only a few seconds, but it seemed to us as if it had lasted half a century.

The more than one hundred overseas students from many countries, with their hearts still pounding, ran from their rooms in surprise. Outside we found that water was gushing up from the ground, and beautiful Minatojima Park was flooded. We were trembling from the icy wind and a Taiwanese student had been so flustered that she had come outside without any shoes and so was forced to stand outside for an hour barefoot.

Thirty minutes after the earthquake, we caught sight of Japanese citizens at last. Compared to the students wearing nothing but light clothes and blankets, the Japanese were clothed more appropriately. Some of the foreign students left to take shelter at Minatojima Elementary School carrying a set of futons. Their lives as refugees had begun.

Port Island was created by reclaiming land from the sea. Perhaps they took earthquakes into consideration when they made the island, because no tall buildings collapsed; the ground merely sunk and became muddy. The jetties around the island cracked so much that in several places sea water gushed in. We heard that because Kobe Port was out of service, the operation of the direct ferries between Tianjing and Kobe had been rerouted to Osaka Port.

Two

Soon after the earthquake, we started discussing our many problems amongst ourselves. January 17th and 18th saw long queues of people who had come to shop at the two supermarkets on Port Island; Daiei and Toho. Thousands of people waited quietly in perfect order, and in turn bought items like rice, bread and instant food. We rarely saw people push in. Although most shops restricted the number of things a person could buy in order to enable an even distribution of the available goods, a foreign student who started queuing at ten in the morning entered the shop at seven in the evening only to find there was a minimal amount of food left. Only seasonings remained in the shop at closing time. Even tissue paper was sold out. As all daily necessities had been sold out, everyone became flustered.

We ran out of rice. As the service of the Portliner (a monorail) was suspended, we walked from Port Island to Sannomiya, which took us thirty minutes. The sky was blue as usual, but the beautiful city of Kobe had disappeared. We were worried that the prices would be inflated, as in Japan there are no governmentally run shops, so we made up our minds to buy things, even if they were rather expensive. Due to the earthquake many shops were closed down. Searching around though, we finally found a small shop specializing in rice and liquors in Fukiai, near Sannomiya.

When we asked about the price of rice, the clerk quoted us a price of 3,500 yen for a 5 kg package, but on buying it, the shopkeeper told us the price was 4,000 yen. We concluded that prices in Kobe could be expected to rise rather high. But, on continuation of our shopping expedition, our expectations were proved wrong; our rice buying experience was the only case in which we were the victims of profiteering. Japanese service industries, such as retailing have always regarded their customers as gods. Most managers didn't even consider the earthquake disaster as a profiteering opportunity. Rather, thinking that the coming days would prove to be important in the long run, they expressed their warm-heartedness to the victims through sales, free services, etc., and thus succeeded in becoming a perfect self-advertisement to the people.

Three

It is often said that social order never fails to worsen after a large scale natural disaster, but surprisingly Kobe was quiet and orderly after the earthquake. Police officers were rarely seen, except those who were controlling traffic on the roads. The distribution of relief supplies depended mostly on volunteers. The victims had complaints about the surprisingly slow reaction of the Self Defence Forces and the measures taken by Prime Minister Murayama, of which some appeared in an NHK program during which they criticized him. Later, Diet members investigated the measures taken by the Prime Minister to supply relief after the earthquake. Three days after the earthquake, the Japanese started tearing down destroyed buildings, and began to construct temporary houses.

The Japanese ordinarily have great patience. Often when severely reprimanded by their company boss, they keep silent and endure the criticism. Staying in Japan, we always thought in our mind that it was exhausting to live like the Japanese. We thought that living such a life was like killing the individual self. However the degree of order after the earthquake showed the good aspects of their strong patience. We think that if every person had acted in their own separate ways, we couldn't have enjoyed the order now achieved.

Four

The Japanese are renowned for their spirit of respecting their jobs, and this touched us deeply. On the day of the earthquake, despite the total suspension of railway services, many workers were seen walking to their offices on foot.

Mr Ichiki, who works at the copy desk department of the Kobe News, lives in Ashiya City. After the earthquake, he rushed to his head office in Sannomiya. It usually takes him twenty minutes by train, but this time he walked for as much as three hours. The Kobe News Head Office had been completely destroyed in the quake. The computer system in the copy desk department had broken down so they weren't able to issue newspapers. As the Kobe News could count on the cooperation of the Kyoto News, Mr Ichiki left for Kyoto with his colleagues. He wasn't able to return home for a week due to his job. On the 20th, Professor Ryuhei Hatsuse (Faculty of Law at Kobe University), worried about his students, walked three hours from Toyonaka City in Osaka Prefecture with a backpack full of bottles of water and onigiri (rice balls) on his back. Professor Hatsuse brought not only food items but also warm-heartedness to his students.

Five

We were especially interested in the reports of the earthquake by the Japanese media, probably because we used to work as newspaper reporters ourselves. The effect of the mass media in such an emergency is very significant. Less than five minutes after the earthquake occurred, radios cancelled all scheduled programs and started broadcasting information about the earthquake live. An hour later, electricity was reconnected and everyone turned on their TVs. TV stations such as NHK, TBS, JNN and ABC were all reporting live via helicopters which were dispatched over the city.

Compared to that of TV and radio, newspaper reporters were confronted with many disadvantages. They had to compensate for these by the depth of their reporting. Most newspapers carried a list of casualties over several pages, and a number of original interviews as well. The swiftness of the Japanese mass media after the earthquake must be recognized as first-class. However, we do feel doubt as to the attitudes of TV reporters who, whilst themselves standing in the street, thrust microphones towards victims in rooms that were about to collapse. Some Japanese victims who live in the same shelter as us pointed to the sky, at five or six helicopters flying in a group, and said, "I think it would be a great help if they were used to carry relief supplies rather than to

Days in Kobe

Wu Yu Zhen (m) CHINA
Kobe Gakuin University
(Translated by Kang Ching Chong)

"Japan was born from earthquakes; will she, in irony, be destroyed by earthquakes?" This was a question I had frequently posed to my Japanese friends, as I myself was worried, despite the fact that for the past five years I had been living in the supposedly earthquake-free Kobe.

Those who survived that terrible quake in January can be considered to be earthquake experts. We aren't planning to give advice to the real experts but don't they think that telling people that there was an earthquake AFTER the earthquake doesn't really amount to anything? I think that that's just a wee bit too late. Since it is not possible to forecast if and when an earthquake will strike, I strongly feel that the time and technology would be better spent if it was used to discover ways of preventing disaster and reducing the damage after a quake, or maybe even helping the victims.

It is not possible for us humans to stop nature from taking her course, but somehow the seismologists don't seem to think so. This is the one thing about the quake that I regret the most.

Two of the young foreign students who perished in the quake were from the same country as me. They also graduated from the same Japanese language school that I did. They had arrived in Japan just three months earlier and they probably had great plans for their future. However, now, with their lives ended before their prime, they will never age, instead, they will be forever young in Kobe. As time passes by, people will forget them. I feel very sorry for them because the only thing I can do is bid them farewell and hope that they may rest in peace.

These five years that I've spent in Kobe, before and even after the quake, have been good years. I won't hate Kobe. Before, I didn't really understand the meaning of "Osewa ni narimashita" (Thank-you for looking after me) in Japanese and thought that it was just ambiguous jargon, but now I know that it's not. Now I can really feel what it means. My dear Kobe, "Osewa ni narimashita".

Moments of Fear - Eyewitness to the Great Hanshin Earthquake

—
Wu Zun Min (m) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Kirsty McCann)

1. Hellish Recollections

"At 5:46am on the 17th January, an earthquake of intense scale occurred in Hyogo Prefecture. The magnitude measured 7.2 at the origin, Awaji Island, and the type, vertical. The effects of this quake were to be felt throughout the whole of Japan, yet the most stricken areas were Kobe (Centre, Sannomiya Station M7), Awaji Island (Ichinomiya M7), Osaka (M5), and Kyoto (M5). Although the shaking only lasted 30 seconds, the ground suffered large displacements. Buildings within the city of Kobe, elevated highways, railway bridges, telephone poles and roads alike all fell down within moments, destroyed. Gas, electricity and water supplies were cut off, and due to leakage from the gas pipes, fires broke out in 190 areas. The Kobe sky was aglow. Due to the limited amount of water, the fire engines were pressed to find other ways to extinguish the ravaging fires.

As though finally having awoken from a dream, the people of Kobe escaped from their collapsing houses. This modern city had suddenly become dysfunctional, engulfed by confusion and chaos, and shaking with fear. According to the police report that evening, over 1400 people had perished (present count: 5420), 4200 suffered injuries, and 51,998 houses had collapsed. This day is remembered as "The day of the devil..."

The above was written in February's edition of a Kansai Foreign Student's newsletter named 'China-Japan News'. The author, Kobe's chief journalist, was in the region at the time and is a direct witness to this unprecedented 'Great Hanshin Earthquake'.

Having lived and studied in Kobe for close to five years, I feel very familiar with all the city's main buildings and roads. But now, all those hundreds of years of history which gradually built this quiet port town have suddenly been erased, leaving nothing but death and destruction. In less than a moment, hundreds of thousands of citizens were pushed, as though into hell, to the depths of despair. If I had not witnessed the event with my own eyes I would never have believed it. This cruel reality of not fiction nor myth, is one of great sorrow.

2. A Fearful 30 Seconds

In the early hours of the 17th January, the Osaka and Kobe regions of Japan were as they always were of a morning - silent. Those who had taken advantage of the long weekend (Adult's Day, 16th) to enjoy themselves, were tired and fast asleep in their beds. A new working week was about to begin in two or three hours

I awoke to the complaints of an unbearable headache from my wife at around 5 o'clock (she had caught a cold three weeks earlier, and finally it had begun to improve over the last couple of days). I brought her some water and medicine, then turned out the light and went back to bed. The time was 5:20am.

Just as visions of dreaming began to enter my head, a great noise came up from below, and suddenly I felt myself being violently shaken up and down, like a boiling egg. Before I could

respond, I was thrown out onto the floor. At the same time, all the doors and windows began to rattle ferociously. Outside was pitch black, but mysteriously I could see a strange light coming from somewhere. Then the room started to shake from side to side. For twenty seconds, the vibrations became increasingly larger, as sounds of furniture falling, my wife screaming, and the rumbling noise from below, all echoed in my ears. All I could do was throw the rug over my wife's head, and cover my own with my hands. This moment was as scary as being thrown into the depths of hell

I don't know how long we remained like that, but eventually the shaking did stop (I discovered later that it only lasted for thirty seconds, but at the time it felt much longer). I was so scared I didn't know what to do, but my wife calmly turned to me and said, "Grab the passports and let's get out of here!". In the panic, I couldn't find my precious glasses (the electricity had been cut off). Thankfully, my wife found a flashlight so I was able to use it to search for them in the disarray. We escaped via the emergency exit (although all electricity in the building had been cut off, the emergency stairway lights were still working), and went outside. The area was full of people, with a long line in front of the telephone box. My wife and I stood there, clutching our bag with the passports and a little cash inside, shivering in the cold winter air.

Gradually, dawn arrived. The wailing of ambulance sirens became more urgent and frequent. Bit by bit, I was able to guess the extent of the damage as the sun rose further. Trees and telephone poles on the opposite side of the road had fallen over, and most buildings were either on a lean or had completely collapsed. Fortunately, the Amagasaki Foreign Student's Dormitory where we lived had hardly been damaged. It was a miracle that it had withstood an earthquake of such intensity.

3. Natural or Man-Made ? - a mysterious three days

After four hours of tidying up, we were eventually able to enter the room again. We picked the fragments of broken glass out of the tatami mats, and turned on the television (this was another miracle; the areas of Kobe, Ashiya, Nishinomiya and Southern Hyogo Prefecture were without gas, electricity or water for a long time - many people were unable to drink clean water, or have a bath for weeks. But in our building, the electricity was off for less than a day). We were amazed by the broadcasts we saw. The Kobe sky was filled with black smoke due to the hundreds of fires burning uncontrolled. Each newspaper had dispatched crews in helicopters to film coverage and to report live on the situation. Although fire engines had arrived at the scene, they were doing nothing but preventing people from trying to enter the burning houses. The fires spread, carried by the wind, engulfing more houses and buildings. My heart ached as I thought of all the people who were trapped, unable to escape, destined to die amongst the flames. As my wife and I sat there on the tatami, we couldn't bear to look at the screen. I wanted to cry out, yet my voice refused; I wanted to stand but I couldn't. I sat there, tears streaming down my face. I couldn't understand how such a nightmare could become a reality in the developed nation of Japan.

The fires in Kobe city's Nada and Higashi Nada ward, Chuo ward and Nagata ward continued for three days during which over one hundred and forty hectares of land was destroyed. Eventually, water from the ocean was brought in to extinguish the fires, but it was too late - Kobe was ruined. The 250,000 people forced to shelter in around fifty refugee centres were now faced with the new challenge of having to survive without gas, water or electricity supplies.

To cries of anger regarding the belated relief operations, the Japanese Government replied with excuses including "no water", and "lack of experience". (I still don't understand! In China, there are fire hydrants everywhere - why are there none in Japan? Surely they can be used in situations of water shortage?) I really thought it was strange. At such a time when even momentary hesitations could cost hundreds of lives, why did the government waste so much time, possibly

causing thousands of deaths? Can this be forgiven?

Three days later, those who had lost their house and family returned to the scorched areas to search for remains and memories amongst the still warm ashes. Although I myself am not Japanese, it pained me to witness this. Articles in the Asahi newspaper criticized the government's response, reading, "Natural disasters are terrifying but man-made ones are even worse" (this is now called the second disaster). I do not wish to comment on this, but nevertheless compare it to the earthquake that occurred one year earlier in Los Angeles. Although the magnitude was the same - a seven on the Richter Scale - the American government acted quickly, even dispatching teams of helicopters to search for survivors. Because they were able to rescue all the injured people trapped in their residences so quickly, only sixty deaths were suffered due to the earthquake. Comparatively, the Great Hanshin Earthquake claimed over 5400 lives and caused countless injuries. It may be said that the majority of deaths were a direct result of government negligence. (One Chinese man, Mr. Lin, was buried clutching his six year-old son when their house collapsed around them. Fifty-four hours later the Self Defense Forces arrived, but it was too late - the child's life had expired. Why didn't they come earlier? When even one hour could have made a difference, why were they so slow in coming?). According to reports, the Self Defense Force wasn't dispatched until the 19th January, fifty hours after the earthquake occurred. Help relief teams were sent from France and Switzerland, but by then it was too late. Japan refused most of the offers of support and supplies they received from other countries. Why? I will never forget those three, senseless days for as long as I live.

4. To Kobe to look for my landlord

For the three days after the quake, I lived through each carrying a great burden of tension and unease. At night the aftershocks refused to wane, sometimes fairly strong ones of above M3 occurring more than once. (In the first week, over seven hundred aftershocks were felt.) My wife and I each packed an emergency bag, which we could grab and leave the house at even the slightest tremor. Sometimes we slept downstairs in the guest room, as it appeared to be relatively safe.

The days continued, full of nervous tension and uncertainty in the aftermath of the quake. But for me, there was another worry gradually increasing in my mind; the safety of Mr. Morita, our 74 year-old landlord. He lived in Nada Ward, one of the most damaged areas, including many houses which had been ravaged by the fires. I tried to ascertain their whereabouts, contacting the police, NHK, information hotlines - everything I could think of. But he was nowhere to be found. So, I decided to go and look for him myself. On the morning of the 19th, after checking the air in my bicycle tyres, I cycled into Kobe carrying food and water supplies my wife had prepared. Because most of the roads were broken up, and many people were walking into the city, it took me three hours to travel the distance which can usually be covered in less than twenty minutes. As I travelled through Nishinomiya and Ashiya city, I noticed the damage was gradually becoming more severe, with many houses reduced to rubble and debris everywhere. More than once I had to veer from my course to avoid the mess on the roads. I became one in a long line of many who were streaming into Kobe to search for their close friends. Most people were struggling with food and water, slowly approaching each of their destinations with anxious and worried looks on their faces, old and young alike. I was surprised to see that although there was some thousands of people in the procession marching to Kobe, travelling along narrow roads and enduring great masses of people, there was absolutely no pushing or shoving. At times when only one-way traffic was able to proceed, rules were observed - both cars and people alike tried their best to keep to the left-hand side of the road I had always been aware of the myth of Japanese patience and good manners, but never would I have thought that in such a time as this, when most people had lost property, possessions and family to the earthquake, that such a state of mind would prevail. "Be patient and always try to avoid getting in the way of your neighbour." I was amazed

by this maintenance of public peace and order.

I arrived in Kobe at 1:00pm. When I finally found the place where my landlord had lived in for two years, I was amazed at the state of it. All that was left of that beautiful expensive two storey house was the roof. The big pine tree in front, which I loved so much, had also fallen over. The apartment block over the other side of the road was also completely destroyed. It was obvious this area had been ravaged by a fire. As my eyes took in the scene, my heart began to race - was my landlord OK? I began to search. At last, I found a piece of paper stuck to a low wall, with a message written in characters I knew to be Morita's. "We are all OK, and have gone to Tokyo "I cried with happiness and relief. Afterwards, I discovered that they had been buried inside the house for five hours until relief workers rescued them. The people living behind them, some students from Kobe University, had grabbed some fire extinguishers as soon as they themselves had escaped, and put the fire out. When they had moved into their apartment, Mr. Morita had done all that was in his power to look after them. In the face of the earthquake, they were able to repay him for his kindness. When I heard this, I was really touched. It is comforting to know that in the threat of great danger, friends will unite with bravery to help those others who are less fortunate.

5. Epilogue

One month has passed since the earthquake. When I wrote this account of my experiences, I once again relived all my thoughts and fears. Now, thirty days later, 5441 people are dead and 27,000 living in refugee shelters. But the city of Kobe is far from despair, and the citizens are doing their best to cope. Slogans of: "Let's unite to rebuild Kobe", and "Fight, Kobe!" are to be seen everywhere.

Mr. Morita called me from Tokyo and told me he wants to build another apartment in the same place as before for the students who rescued him from his burning house. When asked how much it would cost, he replied lightly, "Oh, not that much - no more than 80,000,000 yen anyway. Maybe I won't be able to return it all, but I have a son and a daughter, so its OK. Ha ha." His bright and intrepid voice echoed on the phone. When I heard that Mr. Morita had lost everything in the quake, I prayed for the fulfillment of his dreams with tears running down my face. If a country is blessed with such optimism and spiritual strength in its people, surely it can conquer any problem, and can create miracles too.

To live and to love

Yang, Jae Young (m) KOREA
Kobe Gakuin University
(Translated by Welody Ivonne Tan)

On the morning of the 17th, as usual, I finished my work and ate a light meal. I went to bed at almost 3.30 a.m. Two hours later, I experienced something I had never experienced before and I don't wish to experience ever again.

Neither like a dream nor reality, I felt as if my body was falling from the sky. All of a sudden, like hundreds of bombs exploding simultaneously, there was a tremendously loud noise. It seemed as if the walls of my apartment were tumbling down around me. I screamed. Afterwards, I could not believe that I had screamed, for the first time in my life. I opened my eyes. In an instant it came to me. "EARTHQUAKE!" I couldn't decide whether or not to leave my room. I panicked, not knowing what to do. When I finally came to my senses, I jumped out of bed. Dressed only in my underwear, I groped for the rest of my clothes and dashed out whilst dressing myself.

I escaped from the fourth floor to the first floor. The passageway was crowded with people desperately trying to escape, as was I. (I suppose it is only natural for people to try to escape from an ancient five storey building which looked as if it would give way at any moment).

Trying my best to stay clear from tall buildings, I tried to find a friend of mine living in the same building. I found him carrying his radio, amidst all the chaos. I realize now that in a case of emergency like this, torchlights and radios come in handy.

When daylight broke, we were able to see the full extent of the damage caused by the earthquake. The public bath I had often frequented had fallen flat. Its tall chimney had toppled over and the top half of it was leaning on the wall of the roof above mine, with the bottom part landed on the roof of a neighbouring taxi company.

Ten houses in my neighbourhood had collapsed and it was a horrible sight. There were people buried under the rubble. Some of my neighbours were trying to pull the trapped people out, as did I, although I was afraid that the building would collapse on me. I was praying hard that there would be no more aftershocks, at least until after I was out of the building. I broke out in a cold sweat as I was helping, scared but glad I was able to help people.

Even after all rescue efforts had ended, I was still scared. I couldn't gather enough courage to go back to my room for two days. On the second night, starving, I contemplated returning to my room to retrieve some potatoes I had in store, but fear got the better of me. It was not cowardice, but more like just hating the idea of going back.

At a nearby junior high school, as it was cold, people collected wooden boards from collapsed houses to burn. Someone had been distributing home-made onigiri (rice balls). The rice balls had been made for us by people living in areas not as badly hurt by the quake. I was touched by the feeling of love and affection I could feel coming from each and every tiny little rice cake made for us.

On the third day after the earthquake, I went back to my home country. I realized that I couldn't

afford to fall sick here because as a third year student, I only have one year left to complete my studies in Japan. However, upon returning from my country I felt ashamed of myself. When I returned to my apartment, I was welcomed by messages left for me by my friends, awaiting my reply. These messages were protecting my room while I was home in Korea. With mixed feelings of happiness and shame, I cried.

My feelings of shame of my selfishness drove me to volunteer my services as a massager at a shelter. However, within a week, my fingers ached so much that I had to seek medical treatment for almost ten days.

Even though it's been over a month since the quake, whenever I hear the sound of sirens wailing from an ambulance, there is a feeling of pain deep in my heart. Nevertheless, I have learned a lot of things from the earthquake. I know now that I have to do my best in life, so that, if and when I die, I will have no regrets. I know now that should I fall in love, I will not be afraid to love, and that I should also love my own life.

Reflections of the Earthquake

Zhai Gui Sheng (m) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Hannah Lee)

Three months have already passed since the earthquake. The cherry blossoms have bloomed and withered. There was no one there to sweep away the blossoms when they fell through the rain, so I felt particularly sad. As if my heart is the same as those fallen blossoms, I don't want to remember the brilliant times and I find it hard to look back on those days of so much pain. But, I was asked by Mrs Seguchi of the Foreign Students Office to be in charge of the Chinese stories for this book so I now have many essays lying on my desk. As I proof read and type them into my word-processor, distant thoughts of the earthquake float into my head

***My experiences of January 17**

There were many earthquakes when I was in Tokyo. Even though it was clear that the office was shaking, my co-workers, as if nothing was happening, would have a file and a cup in their left hand as they sat writing with the right. When we had a break, they taught me something. That is, in Japan, especially the Kanto Region (around Tokyo) the buildings are built to strict earthquake standards so there is no particular need to worry when an earthquake occurs.

When the Great Hanshin Earthquake happened on January 17, I at first felt the same way. As my room was shaking and I heard the sound of the light falling in the kitchen, I realised it was an earthquake and so judged that the best thing to do would be to pull the futon over my head and stay still. However my wife who had had no experience of earthquakes became upset and urged again and again for us to take refuge outside. Reluctantly I picked up my coat and blanket and went outside. All around was a deathly silence and for a moment I wondered if I was hallucinating. After the earthquake had finished, we went back inside and tried to get in contact with teachers and friends. In a lot of cases, I couldn't get through, but the ones I did manage to contact all said "I was very surprised. My house shook as if it was on a swing."

We had no electricity and hadn't heard any news reports. We lay down in bed, and as if we were children expecting punishment, waited for the aftershocks and the morning. When I heard a car outside in the parking lot, it occurred to me that we could take refuge in the car, so picking up the blanket again we escaped to the car. We turned on the radio and heard that already around fifty people were reported dead. Far off, it was becoming clear that it was a disaster beyond my imagination.

In the morning I set off to Okurayama to meet a friend who had come back from Tokyo but couldn't return to his home because of the earthquake. Along the way I was constantly passed by police cars and ambulances. I was shocked to see the fires in Nagata Ward. I guessed that at least one hundred of my friends who had had numerous experiences with earthquakes would now be dead.

Now looking back, I can see that the Great Hanshin Earthquake exceeded my friends' experiences by far. It is only by great luck that we are still alive. The ruins from the fires and the fallen buildings in Nagata, Nada and Higashi-Nada Wards are more than sufficient evidence of this. In many places, clocks lay stopped at 5:46. This shows how strong the earthquake really was.

***Chinese Students Information Office**

At the time of the earthquake, I was the president of the Chinese Students Association in Kobe. I knew that everyone would be angry if we stayed closed not doing anything to help, but in the beginning we had no idea as to what to do. I got a call from Mr Masaharu Honda of the Japan-China Friendship Association of Hyogo Prefecture who offered us the use of their office as a relief centre. The most difficult problem of finding a place from which to work from had been solved, so we decided to try and help all we could. I got in contact with the deputy president of our association Liu Yu Zhen and we started to think about what we could do.

With all traffic at a stand-still and the fear of further aftershocks, Mr Honda, Liu and I went to the Japan-China Association and decided on a plan of action. On the third day we were able to get in touch with other foreign students; Jin Ye, Kong Jun, Liu Zhen Jun, Wang Li Bin, Wang Xing and many others. I was filled with admiration for Jin Ye because he went around the evacuation centres from the first day on his motorbike searching for Chinese students. Later on, Kang Jian, Wang Ke Xing, Chen Yi Gong, Lei Jing Ping, Liu Li etc also came to support us and help out. We tried to cheer up the students in evacuation, we visited Chinese people injured in hospital, met the families of the students who had died, and gathered information to pass on to the students... Day and night we worked, not realising we were exhausted. By the end of February we started to collect condolence money and emergency supplies. We tried to think of ways to get support to help the foreign students.

As the Japan-China Association office is in Motomachi where for a long time there was no water or gas, our main meal was instant noodles. We received a lot of assistance and support from KCC Company and other organisations and individuals. The staff of the Japan-China Association also came everyday to the office to help. I didn't feel sad at all. My wife also came everyday to help, and all around us were enthusiastic people. It warmed my heart just hearing the simple words "gambatte" [go for it] and "thanks".

It was mostly in the day time when we made our way around the evacuation centres on motorbikes or bicycles. There was confusion everywhere on the roads, but being careful we were not in any real danger. (file night I went by car to Nagata Ward. It was drizzling and all around was a deep silence. At one stage I passed under a building that looked as if it was about to collapse, so I sped up as I passed under it. Five seconds later, I heard a big crashing noise from behind me. I stepped on the brakes and turned back to see the building I had just passed under collapsed in the middle of the road. My heart was racing so much I had to stop the car and take a rest. I have never experienced so much surprise, that now looking back I almost feel embarrassed.

Recently I took part in two memorial services. The first was in Suita, Osaka under the auspices of the Chinese Consulate, the second was by Kobe University. As I saw the photographs of the dead students displayed amongst the flowers I felt the urge to cry. Only yesterday we were drinking and playing together, yet today it is a totally different world. Thinking about it, where does one draw the line between life and death? Even though those who died were still so young, they go, leaving their family and friends and depart from this world. I wonder where do they go and what are they doing now? Indeed, life is something I do not understand.

Here I would like to take the opportunity to thank my friend Yura Yayoi. She rang up soon after we had established the Chinese Foreign Students Information Centre and offered to help with the relief effort. At first she rode around relief shelters in Nishinomiya, Takarazuka and Ashiya on

her bicycle. When she had finished that she came to Sannomiya and collected information on foreign students with injuries, and also helped with the administration and the collection of condolence money. We felt embarrassed when we saw her; we took rests even when we weren't tired, but she worked right through, not knowing tiredness and without thinking of the glory or the repayment of her kindness. On the other hand I don't think much of the other foreign students who didn't help out but just received, or those who helped only a little but expect glory and reward.

***Postscript**

I like Kobe and have from the very first day I came down from Tokyo. Kitano, Harbourland, Port Island, Kobe Comprehensive Sports Park, Happiness Village, Torihige (my favourite yakitori restaurant in Oji Park). After the earthquake going around these places one by one and seeing how they are now I feel incredibly sad. This is only one station in my life, but I got such a sudden jolt that I feel as if I have lost heart.

Soon it will be Golden Week. Thinking of the business from before the earthquake and the sadness of this time and because of the prayers for revival in the future, surely there will be many customers in Sannomiya, Harbourland and Port Island in Kobe. I don't think that Jian Zhen (the boat that runs from Tianjing to Kobe) from China will be calling into Kobe in the near future, but I pray that the overseas visitors that have arrived at Kansai International Airport will love Kobe as much as I do and won't be able to leave. Kobe is a town flowing with love, emotion and spirit!

Earthquake Experience

Zhou Shi Jie (m) CHINA
Kobe University
(Translated by Prashant Pardeshi)

At school, we were taught that Japan is a country where natural calamities such as volcanoes, typhoons and earthquakes occur frequently. Thus, naturally my image of Japan then was of a country with many disasters.

However, since my arrival in Kobe, whenever news related to these occurrences appeared on TV, I usually took them lightly as if they were not related to me. I never thought - even in my worst dreams - that a day would come when I myself would be a victim of such a calamity. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, in the past several years there had been neither an earthquake of serious magnitude nor any other natural calamity such as a volcanic eruption or tsunami (tidal wave) in the Kansai region. It is widely accepted that earthquakes can occur at any time and at any place - however, most of the people in Kansai believed otherwise.

It was on the 17th January, 1995, at 5:46am, that the so-called 'impossible' earthquake became a reality in Kansai. At that time, all my family (wife and three children), including myself were fast asleep. However, we were awoken by the terrible shaking. I suddenly realized that it was an earthquake but since it was my first encounter with such a situation I had no idea as to what I should do. Instinctively, my wife and I turned over and covered our children. The water flask on the wardrobe tumbled to the floor and spread water all over the room. After some time, the tremors stopped, however the electric supply was cut off and the room was dark. I tried to locate my clothes but discovered they were all drenched. I knew the torch was lying somewhere in the room but couldn't find it, so I lit my lighter and was able to locate it finally. I went to find some clothes in the other room, but neglected to realize that there was a lot of broken glass on the floor and thus cut my leg. I dressed myself hurriedly, covered my children with a futon and rushed outside.

It was the middle of winter, and as it was early morning the temperature was freezing cold outside. Some men staying on the fourth floor of my apartment block took my wife and children out of our room and put them in a car. My heart was full of gratitude for them. The person standing next to me switched on a radio and we learnt that Nagata ward had experienced severe damage.

By around 7 o'clock it became bright and we realized that there was a crack approximately one centimeter thick running down the wall of our apartment. The aftershocks followed one after the other. Everyone was tense. My neighbour advised me to get diapers, a nursing bottle and food supplies from the house. I returned home, cleared away the broken glass and gathered together some necessities. My wife was very frightened and preferred to stay back in the car with the children.

At around 8 o'clock my wife and children returned home. However, a friend of ours advised us that we should take refuge. I did not want to go to an evacuation centre, but thinking of our children we decided to go. We were allowed to stay at a nursing home for the aged, which had been converted into an evacuation centre. We were all very hungry and in order to get some food,

I went to the supermarket. Items like milk and bread were already sold out.

News related to the earthquake was broadcasted continuously on the television. Many buildings in central Kobe had either collapsed or were on fire. Kita-ward, a residential area, had however comparatively less damage. According to the early broadcasts the death toll was reported to be ten people, but within no time it rose to over two thousand. At that moment I realized the severity of the earthquake. The life-line (water, gas, transportation, telephones) had been paralyzed. I tried to contact my friends but could not get through. We stayed in the evacuation centre for two days. Later I discovered that a fellow student in the Masters programme with me had lost his life. I felt extremely sad.

Three months have passed since the earthquake and life is gradually returning to normal. However, even now, I sometimes feel more frightened than I was at the time of the earthquake. Thoughts such as what would have happened if the wardrobe had fallen on our heads, or what would have happened if I had started a fire when I lit the lighter, occasionally enter my mind. This earthquake "phobia" might continue for some time.

It is beyond doubt that the earthquake was a valuable experience for me in the sense that it offered me an opportunity to realize the extent of nature's great power.

Report of the Earthquake

Anonymous

(Translated by Marcia Kono)

An intense tremor and noise woke me suddenly. Having absolutely no idea as to what was happening, I tried to stand up, but found I could not. Everything was shaking terribly. It was early in the morning, and it was still dark. Concepts that existed in my mind so clearly, like geometry and stability, became so confusing... I felt I was going to die.

This is how I felt during those most frightening twenty seconds of my life; seconds that brought much destruction to Kobe city, causing the death of five and a half thousand people...

Three months before the earthquake, I had moved to Higashinada-ku, Fukae Minami-machi. Whenever I gave my address, people were surprised, for it was the ward with the highest number of deaths. As soon as the shaking calmed down, I went outside into the streets, and saw collapsed wooden houses, destroyed buildings, streets 'cracked' and fallen posts... I felt myself to be a survivor. The collapse of a highway that was only two hundred meters away from my apartment left a huge impression on me

A lot of people were still trapped under the rubble, while others were trying to rescue them. There were enormous lines in front of the public telephones that were still working. There were not enough firemen and ambulances to attend to such a largely destroyed area. Transportation means were completely destroyed; there were no trains, and most of the streets were in chaos due to collapsed buildings and unpassable streets. We were completely isolated. There was no electricity, water, gas or telephone lines.

Luckily I was able to contact my family before they found out about it through the news, but I was unable to contact my friends in Kobe, or the ones living in other cities in Japan. I imagine that the experiences of each person living in Kobe was terrible. Some lost their relatives and friends, some lost their houses, their jobs. It became difficult even to survive. In my case, the fear and impotence I felt was traumatizing. The fact that I was alone and did not know what to do in such a case made me feel defenseless.

There was no panic at any moment, demonstrating the passivity of the Japanese people in face of such a natural catastrophe. It may be this trait which led to the delay in help, and to the refusal of outside medical and rescue assistance, which resulted in the increase in the number of deaths. I imagine this lack of preparation was due to the fact that the Kansai area was considered safe and secure against earthquakes.

I stayed three days in Kobe until I was told that it was possible to go from Nishinomiya-Kitaguchi to Osaka by train. I then walked from Fukae, following the train tracks where they had not been destroyed or obstructed by collapsed buildings. It was as if we were all seeking refuge from a war; carrying haversacks and bags in a somber, dark silence. I reached Nishinomiya-Kitaguchi station after a two hour walk, and took a train bound for Osaka. There, life was "normal", in spite of the earthquake. On the night of the 19th, I reached Kansai Ryugakusei Kaikan (in Suita City), where I had lived for my first six months in Japan. The administration personnel still remembered me and immediately provided me with a room. I was finally able to take a 'hot water' bath

It was when I was going to the dining hall that I realized how tired and shocked I was. I could

not eat anything, and suddenly found myself in a strange, alien world where people laughed and talked in loud voices. This discomfort persisted for many days, and for the first time I needed the help of tranquillizers to get me out of that "shock condition".

Some friends from the research laboratory, demonstrating their loyalty towards the members of the group, helped me take my things out from my apartment which I then took to the dormitory. The International Student Center at Kobe University also helped, giving information and basic assistance like food and clothing.

What was contradictory was my professor's attitude in the laboratory. There was no possibility of continuing my research, as all research samples had been lost. Above all, there was not enough time to recover them, nor was there transportation for me to reach Kobe in time to perform and accomplish experiments. However, he did not allow me to go back to my country in February, telling me to stay in Osaka until the end of March. He also suggested that I should stay and travel, like a tourist, as things would be better by March. But as I was preparing my final report in the dormitory, he called me, demanding rudely my presence in the laboratory every day... He did not care that I was now living two hours and a half away from the University. Nor did he asked me how I was feeling. It was only that order he made it clear that, even though it was impossible to perform experiments, that I had the obligation to go, as my scholarship was being paid by the Japanese Government (Mombusho).

Unfortunately, through his attitude I discovered one more 'face' to the Japanese way of thinking and behaving. Obviously, it was only possible because an earthquake happened in Kobe during my two years stay in Japan.

"Pain, as if I am being stuck by needles"

Anonymous

(Translated by Hannah Lee)

Several months have passed since the Great Hanshin Earthquake. The affected areas are being rebuilt at incredible speed, and recovery is well under way. The remains of the damage are slowly disappearing. However, the emotional scars are sure to take longer to heal than the physical damage caused by the disaster. I feel this particularly as someone who experienced the earthquake.

On the morning of the earthquake, January 17, for reasons unknown to myself I woke up earlier than usual, at 5:30am. I was lying in my bed when the earthquake suddenly occurred. I was wide awake at the time so I was very conscious of the shaking. After the shaking had continued for some seconds, it came to a temporary halt so my natural instinct was to climb out of my bed and hide under my desk. However, at that time, a tape recorder that I had on the top of my bookshelf fell down and hit me on the head. I endured the acute pain, but nevertheless ran for the desk. At that time the second wave of the earthquake occurred, so I grabbed hold of the legs of my desk with both hands. When it finished, I became aware of blood dripping from my face onto the floor. The opening of the cut was above my left eye and the blood flowed into my eye so I couldn't see. I wiped my face quickly with some tissues, put on some clothes and raced outside. I was told by some neighbours that I still had blood dripping from my cut, and as there was a hospital close-by I ran there to get attention. The front entrance of the hospital was bent and twisted making it impossible to enter, so I had to go through the basement entrance to enter into the building. There were fragments of shattered glass scattered all along the corridor and water was everywhere. People with injuries began streaming in and lined up silently waiting for their turn to receive treatment. I didn't come across a single person who cried or moaned. At the time, the composure of the Japanese left a strong impression on me. The doctors firstly stopped the blood, and then later treated the patients again. When it my turn came, the doctor said there was not enough anesthetic to give me some, so I was laid down on a bench and had to endure the pain. One doctor held my head in both hands, while the other sewed up my cut. It took five stitches all together, but it genuinely felt like the Chinese proverb, "Zhen zha si de pong" - "Pain, as if I am being stuck by needles" - it is a figure of speech we use to compare to acute pain.

After the earthquake I had many nightmares. My whole body became extremely sensitive and I feel slight shakings that most people can't. At first I had doubts as to whether it was all just an illusion, but after having it confirmed on the radio and television I knew I wasn't hallucinating. Regardless of whether it is night or day, I can feel any slight tremble. My house is close to the road, so when trucks and buses pass by, my room shakes and I get scared that it is another earthquake.

I don't think that many of the foreign students have ever had any experiences with earthquakes before. Because of this, we had no mental or physical preparation in case of such a disaster. I have since thought that it is because of this that the mental and emotional shock was so large. Japan has many earthquakes so I think that when overseas students come to study in Japan at university or Japanese Language schools, the first class should be about earthquakes and training for what to do when one occurs. For example, this could be the first step, and it would be better if there could be further education and training.

Since the earthquake, we foreign students have had a lot of support and help from the Japanese Government and other organisations, and this has helped in overcoming many problems. We have had a lot of moneterial support from many different friendship associations. People like me with only light injuries didn't get much, but when I think of those who died, I am very thankful and feel very lucky that I survived with only slight injuries.

Thank you Allah

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Anonymous

Early morning on 17 January 1995 when the time showed 5.46 am, a very strong earthquake was felt in the Kobe area. A lot of people were still dreaming, as was I. Was I dreaming or is it the end of the world? A bad feeling came into my mind. I'm afraid of death. I opened my eyes and I saw my house shaking violently to the right and left like it was going to fall and bury me alive. For the mean time, I prayed to God to spare my life. I will never be able to forget every second of that tremendous moment in my life. After the earthquake, it was hard for me as there was not enough food and water but the most important things is, I can still see the world around me. Thank you Allah.